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SERMONS,

BY THE LATE

VERY REV. ISAAC MILNER, D.D.

&c. &c.

VOL. I.



ПРИКАЗЪ
ПО
УПРАВЛЕНІЮ
ПОЧТЪ И ТЕЛЕГРАФЪ

SERMONS,

BY THE LATE

VERY REVEREND

ISAAC MILNER, D.D.

F.R.S. & F.A.S.

DEAN OF CARLISLE; PRESIDENT OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE,
CAMBRIDGE; AND LUCASIAN PROFESSOR OF
MATHEMATICS IN THAT UNIVERSITY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

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W. BLACKWOOD, EDINBURGH.

1820.

P R E F A C E.

THERE have not been wanting men ready to assert, that pure and vital godliness has not ranked among its advocates many who have been distinguished for the strength of their minds and their intellectual superiority. It seems therefore desirable, when a bright instance occurs to the contrary, that his religious sentiments should be handed down to posterity.

This is not, perhaps, a fit occasion for eulogising the talents and capacity of the late Dean of Carlisle. It may be proper, however, to say, that they were such as to entitle him to great deference and authority on all subjects to the consideration of which he brought the stupendous powers of his mind.

He is well known to have been a supporter of that body of the Clergy which is called Evangelical ; and it seemed but justice, both to himself and the sacred cause which he espoused, that his name should be enrolled among those who have so ably and so successfully maintained the doctrines which distinguish this part of the community.

The following Sermons may not, perhaps, add to his reputation as a Writer. In many of them there is an obvious carelessness of style, and there may be discovered evident marks of hasty composition. It is hoped, however, that in the more important properties of a Sermon they will not be found defective,—in soundness of doctrine, and in an affectionate earnestness and zeal for the edification of his hearers.—It may be proper to state, that, except perhaps the first in the first Volume and the last in the second, none of them were prepared by the Author for publication.

In these Sermons there are no nice disquisitions on controversial points in Divinity. Neither the followers of Arminius nor Calvin will be gratified by finding their peculiar tenets supported and defended by the arguments of the writer. The Discourses will be found chiefly of a practical nature, and addressed to the hearts and consciences of his audience.

In these volumes the Dean of Carlisle does not appear as the profound Logician, or the able Mathematician, but as the conscientious and zealous Preacher of the Gospel of Christ. His grand object was to administer to the spiritual necessities of his hearers; and this seems to have occupied the whole of his mind, to the total exclusion of all other considerations.

He was *always* more bent on things than words: and hence arise many inaccuracies of style. These might, in many instances, have been corrected; but it was judged

advisable to lay the Sermons before the Public in nearly the same state in which they were written. Many of the texts also will be found inaccurately quoted: these have likewise been left as they came from the Author's pen; for he has always retained the general import of the passage.

Although he seems sedulously to have shunned the introduction of controversial topics into his Sermons, it is nevertheless well known that in the course of his life he devoted much time to the examination of some of the most abstruse and difficult points in Divinity. He has left some manuscripts on these subjects: among them is an essay on the Nature of Human Liberty, which he has prepared for the Press, and which, with some other of his writings, may probably be offered to the Public at a future period.

November 1820.

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SERMON I.

PREACHED ON THE 30th OF JANUARY 1807,
AT ST. MARY'S, CAMBRIDGE.

ISAIAH xxvi. 8.

*In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we
waited for thee—*

—AND in the next verse the Prophet adds,
When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

It is a lamentable proof both of the depravity and the disingenuousness of our nature, that in general, unless God's heavy judgments be inflicted in some shape or other, neither wicked individuals nor wicked nations will learn righteousness. The beauty of the creation, and the established laws of nature, with the numerous beneficent provisions for our comfort and security, in the eye of Reason

call for profound admiration and grateful obedience : but the Apostle Paul bitterly complains that the ancient world, with all their boasted wisdom and acuteness, knew not God ; and, moreover, that they were without excuse, because they did not glorify him with thankfulness, after that he had clearly made known to them his eternal power and godhead by the things which he had created.

But perhaps *extraordinary* blessings are often productive of eminent piety ; and though it be true, that during the enjoyment of the good things of Providence in their *ordinary*, smooth, and uninterrupted course, fallen human nature is not disposed to think much either of the wise Contriver, the benevolent Governor, or the awful Judge of mankind, perhaps it may be hoped that uncommon interferences of the Divine goodness, where blessings are poured out in abundance on ungrateful men, should be followed by a material amendment, both of their internal tempers and their external obedience. Yet here, alas ! though some transient emotions of praise and thanksgiving may be excited in the glow of success and prosperity, woful experience proves that too often these bountiful dispensations of the Creator are

found to serve only as occasions to the creature for shewing the greater alienation of his heart from God, and filling up the measure of his iniquity.

On the contrary, however, we *do* find, that when such special interferences of Providence take place as in Scripture language are called judgments, the inhabitants of the earth sometimes learn righteousness: in other words, that signal afflictions and chastisements effect that, both for individuals and nations, which the most bountiful displays of kindness and compassion had failed to produce.

The holy Scriptures, both in regard to precept and example, are exceedingly full to these points; namely—the great danger of remarkable prosperity, on the one hand; the blessed fruits of sanctified afflictions, on the other. “Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.” —Happy the man whom God correcteth! And frequently the scriptural expressions are such as to intimate that the trial of afflictions is an *essential* part of the discipline of the righteous: for example—“Many are the afflictions of the righteous;” and, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten;” “I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.”

Also, abundance of wealth and power, great prosperity, miraculous deliverances, are constantly represented as the almost certain prognostics of backsliding and decay of the moral and religious principle. Thus, when men have eaten, and are full, they are told to beware lest they forget the Lord their God : and Moses explicitly addresses the Israelites, “ I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, when God shall have brought you into the land flowing with milk and honey, and ye shall have eaten, and filled yourselves, and waxed fat.” And so in particular instances. It was in the King of Assyria’s dungeon that Manasseh, bound with fetters, learned at last those lessons which probably he never would have learned in his own palace at Jerusalem. And, in like manner, I observe it was in distress that the pious Jacob vowed his memorable vow of deep humility, and entire dependence on the Divine will. While this good Patriarch was at home, provided with every thing he could want, and pampered by an indulgent mother, we read of much evil that he did ; I cannot say of any good : and I observe, that his conversion from the ways of a wicked world to serve the living God, appears

to have been brought about entirely by afflictions : it took place when he was driven from home ; when lying in the field, with a stone for his pillow ; and afraid for his life, on account of the the fury of his brother Esau.

Now, though Revelation had been explicit on these points only *as to the fact*, that were enough. *We* ought not only to be content with the salutary instruction, but to receive it with gratitude. We are, however, by no means left in the dark in this matter. In almost every page of Scripture we are taught *how* it is that some cross is needful as long as we live ; namely, to keep us in our right place, dependent on our Maker : for, as soon as we cease to feel our dependence on Him, and experience only what is agreeable to our own humour, there is that in human nature which will soon say, Who is the Lord ?—there is that which will soon excite the motions of sin, “ till they bring forth fruit unto death.”—Neither does this rebellious independent spirit discover itself only in unconverted men, during their natural state of alienation from God. It appears, more or less, in the very best of men ; in persons who have made the greatest progress in religion and virtue : inso-

much, that if they have few outward afflictions to be the means of teaching them the necessary lessons of humility, they generally experience a larger allotment of inward trials on that very account.—It seems, therefore, that, either of one sort or the other, there must be some afflictive visitations from our heavenly Father; which are, indeed, gracious and compassionate dispensations, intended to shew men how much they need to have their eyes opened from vain delusions to see the great truths of religion, and their affections changed from carnal worldly desires, to the relish of heavenly and spiritual enjoyments.—The case of St. Paul is very much to our purpose here, as a striking example of the dealings of God with his dearest favourites. The whole life of this great Apostle, though a chosen vessel, and highly honoured of God, and though one, who in the cause of his Master never counted even his life dear to him, was a series of severe and perilous discipline. It is remarkable, that on the very entrance to his office, in order that he might count the cost, and in no way misapprehend the nature of his commission, he was to be expressly informed how much he had to *suffer* for the sake of his

Saviour ; and afterwards, because a course of incessant weariness and painfulness in external things was not sufficient to preserve him from being exalted above what became the Christian temper, there was given to him some secret and internal trouble, called “ a thorn in the flesh, and a messenger of Satan.”

It is for these reasons, I conceive, that our best divines, in all ages, have judged it useful to display with copiousness and emphasis the advantages of the humbling and afflictive dispensations of Providence ; because such discipline is found to be the most powerful in bringing men to a due sense of religion, by subduing that confidence and sensuality which, in prosperous seasons, make them forget who it is that discomfits the enemy, averts the pestilence, makes the land to flow with milk and honey, and diffuses among the people an affectionate spirit of peace and harmony. Revelation has placed this matter in the clearest light, by pointing out the true source of all human dissingenuousness and corruption, and the wonderful ways of God in restoring to fallen man the lost image of his Maker. Yet, even without the Bible, the *fact* was so universal and so prominent,

that it by no means escaped the wiser part of the Heathen moralists. A Greek historian has observed, “that Fortune never bestows liberally an unmixed happiness on mankind. With all her gifts, there is conjoined some disastrous circumstance, in order to chastise men into a reverence for the gods, whom, in a continual course of prosperity, they are apt to neglect and forget.” And to the same effect speaks the universal voice of ancient wisdom.

We conclude, then, that great prosperity, whether slow, increasing, and continued, or sudden, rapid, and attended with remarkable interpositions, is a dangerous thing for such a depraved creature as man: and again, that adversity and affliction are favourable to religious improvement, whether they take place in the ordinary course of human affairs, or in the more striking way of signal judgments. In support of these principles, we have the sense of the thinking part of mankind in all ages; we have the testimony of Scripture, conveyed in the most intelligible descriptions and pathetic exhortations, and, lastly, confirmed by numerous and striking examples. This is a body of evidence which it is impossible to resist,—a

circumstance always desirable when we would deduce practical inferences for the direction of the conduct either of individuals or of nations.

The following observations, with a view to such inferences, will naturally divide themselves, like the principles from which they are deduced, into *two branches*. And in regard to the former of them—viz. prosperity—taking the word in its extended sense, so as to include both what is usually called success, good fortune, and great advantages, and also great and signal interpositions of a gracious Providence,—the history of this nation for many years past suggests abundant cause to its inhabitants to adore the wise Disposer of all events, and lift up their hearts to Him with grateful songs of praise and thanksgiving. There is not, I suppose, *one* of this learned audience who has not anticipated this reflection, or who will not allow, that here I might, with great propriety, dilate on the numerous blessings which we have long actually enjoyed in this happy island: the temperature of the climate, the fertility of the soil, the unparalleled extension of our commerce, the concomitant and prodigious influx of riches, the increased population, the genius of the inha-

bitants, particularly that part of them who occupy their business in the great waters, and direct with so much capacity and courage the floating bulwarks of this country, both for the purposes of wealth and defence—then add the inestimable privileges of civil and religious liberty—and we form an aggregate which may well be called the glory of this country, and the envy of the neighbouring nations.

Nevertheless, at the head of all these, and without the smallest hesitation, I would place the blessed Reformation from the ignorance and superstition, as well as the folly and wickedness, of Popery. It is through the Reformation that we have for so long a period enjoyed the Gospel of Christ planted among us in its purity, and his Church established by the Legislature itself, with a scriptural simplicity, precision, and dignity, which I do verily believe have never been exceeded by any dominant body of Christians since the Apostles' times.

Every syllable here advanced, respecting the prosperity of this country, is justified by our history in so remarkable a manner, that even its darker periods of plots, rebellions, civil wars, papal

tyranny, and republican fury, ought in no wise to weaken the general impression of our having been in general a happy and highly-favoured people.

I do not mean that there have not been several interruptions of the national freedom and harmony, or that these interruptions were not at the time awful admonitions from Almighty God to our forefathers, for their repentance and amendment ; but that, besides this, on account either of the shortness of the duration of some of those interruptions, or the magnitude of the danger of others, or the completeness of our deliverance from them all, they give just occasion to pious minds, not *merely* for humiliation under the displeasure of Almighty God, but also for grateful acknowledgment of the Divine compassion and interposition.

Unquestionably, the interruption, on the whole the most lamentable, of our national prosperity took place during the civil wars of Charles I., and the succeeding usurpation of Cromwell ; the mournful issue of those unhappy contentions proving, beyond contradiction, that the fanaticism and hypocrisy of sectarian republicans and levelers were as fatal to the health and vigour of a truly Evangelical Establishment, as ever could be the

tyranny and the superstition of the most bigotted Roman Catholics. In no period of our history were there made greater pretences to love of liberty and to purity of religious faith and practice, or fewer efforts in a rational and consistent way to advance and confirm the Protestant interest. In private life, no doubt, there existed multitudes of pious and exemplary citizens among all the contending parties ; yet the whole structure of the reformed religion, as well as of our civil constitution, considered as a systematic national establishment, was grievously wounded during the fury of the Rebellion : it actually expired with the dying Sovereign ; it remained buried under the ruins of the British Constitution as long as the Usurper lived ; and, notwithstanding a multitude of ostentatious declarations of superlative regard for pure Christian doctrine and Christian freedom, it never revived again till the restoration of the Monarchy, and of all the legal authorities in Church and State.

The Papal advocates of those times beheld our confusions with a malignant satisfaction, and afforded help to one side or the other just as they conceived their concurrence with either would most favour the restoration of the Romish hier-

archy. Those few of them who joined the royalists certainly hoped they saw a leaning to Popery in the court and bench of Bishops ; and the many who coalesced with the republicans as certainly believed the King to be an incurable heretic—that is, a sincere and determined protector of the Reformed Church of England ;—and, accordingly, Charles I. in his proclamations reproaches his rebel subjects for forming so unnatural a junction with the common enemy of the civil and religious constitution. In fact, both classes of the Romanists acted in perfect consistence with their own respective views : both detested the Reformation most cordially ; and both were greedy to offer incense once more on British ground to the Roman Pontiff : their difference consisted only in the manner in which they hoped to rebuild the altars of anti-Christ. Moreover, no inconsiderable portion of the Romanists, during these disastrous disturbances, felt little anxiety respecting the prevalence of either party. Faithful to the cause of bigotry and superstition, they predicted, in almost any event of the contention, the downfall of the English Ecclesiastical Constitution ; and they flattered themselves that on its ruins

there could not fail to be established a system more *favourable* at least to the papal hierarchy, and affording a *better* prospect of a general return to the ancient religious communion.

The ultimate objects of a true Roman Catholic are never obscured by any heterogeneous admixtures, never distorted by any oblique attractions. We cannot say this, perhaps, of any other religious denomination whatever ; much less can we pretend to dissect and arrange that multitude of indigested schemes and fancies which, during the rage of novelty in the period now in our view, were poured forth in such abundance, under the pretext of doing honour to the dominion of Jesus Christ and his peculiar saints.

Justice, however, has been so repeatedly done, both from the pulpit and the press, to every inquiry that can be suggested respecting the real motives of all the leading actors in the grand rebellion, that it would be superfluous for me to enter into any nice distinctions concerning the errors, the indiscretions, or the misguided councils of Charles I. on the one hand ; or the ambition, hypocrisy, and fanaticism of the levellers, on the other ; or even to make any attempt at separating the faults from

the excellencies which appeared in the conduct of several of the leading characters of those times. The philosophical historian may be indulged in his critical disquisitions of this sort; may be allowed to raise doubts, and either solve them himself or leave their solution to the ingenuity of posterity; but the humble Christian lays no stress on the speculations of political theorists. It is true he looks on civil and religious liberty as the greatest blessing of society, and on that very account he ever rejoices in the termination of anarchy and despotism: at the same time, fully convinced that the preparation of the heart is from the Lord, in national calamities he humbles himself under the rod of affliction; in prosperous seasons and deliverances he gives glory and praise to the great Disposer of all events.

And certainly this is the right temper with which the sad events brought to our minds by this day's anniversary ought to be reviewed: and if in doing this we always look on the preservation of our National Religion, reformed from Popery, as the most signal of all the blessings bestowed on these dominions by a God of abundant mercy, well may we cry out, "Happy are the people

who are in such a case ; yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God !”

The precise meaning of all these observations is to excite *this one reflection*,—namely, That for a great many years we have been, in fact, a people who have had the Lord for our God ;—that is, a people who have been, on the whole, prosperous beyond example ; a people who have enjoyed extraordinary benefits of various kinds ;—and that, though at certain periods our prospects have been gloomy and dispiriting, yet nevertheless even the suspension of our blessings has in general been comparatively short : we may almost say, “ If heaviness has continued for a night, joy has returned in the morning ;”—and lastly, though disasters have sometimes seemed to come upon us unexpectedly, our deliverances have often been almost miraculous. For, in estimating the greatness of the bounty of the Divine Providence, we are certainly bound to take into the account not only the advantages we have enjoyed, but also the dangers we have escaped. And then, if the Reformed Religion, *upon which I constantly keep my eye*, be considered as the richest jewel of all our possessions, how intense and vivid ought our

grateful feelings to be, when we compare our own truly Christian Establishment with the numerous absurd and visionary models of ecclesiastical constitution vainly imagined during the triumphs of Puritanism and Independency ! How dark was our prospect then, and how boisterous the tempest ! Factionous enthusiasts, and acrimonious republicans, at the helm of affairs ! The danger imminent ; and the probability very little that this jewel of Protestantism should find a safe passage through so many rocks, and shelves, and troubled seas ! Let us, then, never forget who it was that rebuked these furious winds and waters, and produced that astonishing and unexpected calm, which at once restored the beauty and integrity both of our civil and religious establishment.

Once more. It was not many years before these very civil wars, that Popery had shewn its bitter and malignant spirit in the machination of such peculiar treason as must for ever be engraven on the memories of Englishmen in deep lines of horror and indignation : for, surely, in enumerating instances of the prosperity of this country, and of special interpositions of Providence, it were impiety to omit the critical discovery of the memo-

able Fifth of November, in the reign of James I. The very same observation is to be made on the blessed means of our deliverance which closed the disgraceful reign of James II. For if either the detestable scheme of the Gunpowder Plot had succeeded, or if the exertions of our glorious deliverer, William III., from whose advancement to the throne of these dominions we date the security of all our liberties, had not succeeded, it may, I grant, seem impossible for us to compute how many of the splendid advantages above mentioned would have been preserved, how many impaired, or how many totally lost: but of this we are sure, that the good sense of the inhabitants of this country would have been compelled to adopt, profess, and submit to a tyrannical and anti-Christian system of ecclesiastical corruptions, which are foretold and reprobated in Scripture, which have been the disgrace of literature, the scandal both of religion and morality, and the cruel scourge of every people who for their transgressions have been visited with their baleful influence.—I say, then, every loyal subject of this country, every true friend of the unadulterated religion of Christ, ought, with never-failing strains

of gratitude and praise, to give glory to God for those successive wonderful events, which terminated in the preservation and establishment of the Protestant Religion, and of a Protestant Royal Family on the Throne.

The preparative steps in the reign of Henry VIII. which led to these happy conclusions, are contemplated by every English Protestant with a delightful astonishment. I must judge the same of the progressive advancement of the Reformation from Popery during the short life of Edward VI. ; and though its glory was almost extinguished by the fury of his successor, the eclipse was but of short duration, and the Reformed Religion in the triumphant reign of Elizabeth shone forth again in all its strength and beauty. Victories, signal interpositions of Providence, and almost miraculous deliverances, are objects of rational exultation, provided our sentiments are but tempered with Christian moderation and Christian benevolence : and with this reserve *only*, I have no wish to repress the strongest emotions of joy and gladness, which must arise in the mind of every Briton while he refreshes his memory with the detail of the dispersion of the Spanish Armada, the restoration

of the Royal Family after the convulsions of this day's anniversary, the discovery of the infernal mischief of the Fifth of November, or, lastly, our second great deliverance, on the same day of the month, by the courage, integrity, and felicity of King William III., and the combined wisdom, firmness, and moderation of the National Convention in 1688.

And here I would pause for a moment, to reflect whether, on the relation of such a series of successes and deliverances as these, supposing you were totally ignorant of the national character of so prosperous a people, you would not naturally be led to inquire, with suspicious and trembling apprehensions, after the state of their morals, their piety, and their religion?—Then, how devoutly is it to be wished that the authentic records of our progress in virtue of every kind, were found to mark the people of England, as a bright exception to the general influence of long-continued prosperity! But I have no fears of meriting the imputation of being an unmeaning declaimer against vice, when I affirm, that our religion and morals have undergone very material deteriorations during the rapid influx of our wealth, the splendid

successes of our arms, and the prodigious extension of our commerce. Extravagance, licentiousness, and profaneness, have made alarming advances. The riches of individuals have increased, but the public burdens have been suffered to become excessive. Add, that not in a few instances the ostentatious profusion and grandeur of the individual was till lately supported by that abominable African traffic in men, women, and children, which has long been the object of almost universal detestation. Then, in the metropolis, and in other populous towns and cities, what sums of money are consumed in gaudy and unnecessary finery, in expensive convivial meetings, in gaming-houses and other dangerous assemblies ! not to mention the profanation of the Lord's-day by many persons of rank and distinction ; and then add, the very general neglect of Christian worship of God in families ! To such a length have these things proceeded, that we cannot look forward to the rising generation without the most uneasy and dispiriting apprehensions. Affectionate parents complain of the want of discipline in our public seminaries of learning ; but they are to be distinctly informed, that many of the pupils, even before they

come to those seminaries, have been habituated to a systematic profusion, hurtful indulgences, and unlawful gratifications. The evil has been begun at home, and is often no more than a symptom of that general contagion which is fast pervading all ranks and orders, and which our most industrious and best-disposed tutors, and the most watchful and conscientious academical officers, often find it difficult to repress in the conduct even of our very youngest members.

The true cause of all this degeneracy is, I verily believe, not to be sought for either in the want of good laws, or in the neglect of their execution, but in the decay of practical religion. Let but the principles of true religion be clearly understood, fervently inculcated, and heartily embraced, and an improved morality will infallibly follow. Modern historians and political writers have been copious and loud in their praises of the Reformation from Popery ; but it is very plain that the thing these writers are chiefly in love with is merely the *civil* liberty of the Reformation, which was indeed one blessed effect, but by no means the most important effect of our emancipation from Papal despotism. The *revival of pure Christianity*

which took place at the Reformation, is *what forms the boast of that glorious era* ; and I am deeply and awfully convinced, that, unless something like another revival of the same spirit should again manifest itself among us, we shall, in no great length of time, be found to have let go the substance, and retained only the shadow of Protestantism.

I *can* have no fear of incurring a charge either of *ignorance* or *temerity*, when I only repeat in substance what of late years has been frequently much more than intimated from the first episcopal authority* (if learning, and wisdom, and knowledge in the Scriptures and in the history of the Church, be any foundation for authority), that in too many instances even the clergy of the Establishment have materially deviated from the natural, unsophisticated meaning of the Articles and Homilies of the Church of England ; that they have, in fact, preached too much from Socrates and Seneca, and too little from Christ and his everlasting Gospel ; that the reading-desk and pulpit have often been at variance ; and that, in-

* Bishop Horsley.

stead of pressing upon the conscience, with energy, the great and peculiar doctrines of the Gospel—such as the doctrines of original sin, justification by faith, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit—there has been, in many cases, substituted in their place, little more than a vain system of frigid ethics, accommodated to the pride and blindness of human reason. My own little experience *entirely* accords with the admonitions of this learned Prelate, now no more; and with him I further believe, that the doctrine of justification by faith, as stated in the Eleventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth Articles of our Church, is the *very corner-stone* of the whole system of the first Reformers. It was the doctrine both of Luther and Calvin, and of Philip Melancthon, and, lastly, it was the doctrine of the whole college of Apostles.

How far, in the distant periods of the Puritanical excesses, this fundamental doctrine was by some hypocrites perverted to wicked purposes (as the very best things are ever liable to abuse), or how far, in modern times, some fanatical and illiterate itinerant teachers have given just occasion to Antinomian interpretations of the same thing, I will not take upon me to decide; but I have no

doubt, that in the anxiety to resist and expose the dangers of Antinomianism, many, of late years, actuated by more zeal than knowledge, have mutilated the whole Gospel system, totally destroyed the analogy of faith, and expressed themselves in such a way as scarcely to have kept clear of the grossest errors of the Pelagian heresy. The remedies for this mischievous practice, in cases where it originates from mere error of judgment, will consist in a better acquaintance with the *interior* of ecclesiastical history, and a closer and more diligent study of the evangelical system, and, lastly, a more serious and habitual application of the doctrines of the Gospel to men's own individual circumstances, for the express purpose of spiritual improvement, and the formation of Christian dispositions. The using of these remedies by persons who sincerely wish to be set right, will be crowned with success, as *infallibly* as, that God is faithful who hath promised, that if any man will do his will he shall not remain ignorant of the saving truths of the Gospel of Christ. But the dangerous sort of instruction above alluded to does not always arise from mere ignorance, but from something besides, something worse than

any mere ignorance whatever. In many instances, besides a complete unacquaintance with the marrow of the Protestant confessions of faith, and the specific difference between these and the Roman Catholic tenets in doctrinal articles ; besides also the total misapprehension of the meaning of our own Articles and Liturgy ; there is often superadded a lamentable opposition of the human heart to the very doctrines themselves, of salvation by Christ and renovation by his Holy Spirit.

Men do not thoroughly believe these doctrines : the pride of corrupt nature is not humbled into a thorough acquiescence in the Revealed Word, much less to a grateful acceptance of the terms of Revelation. Hence the true interpretation of the Scriptures, and of our own Articles, is often condemned as irrational, without ceremony ; and it is found in vain to insist on the plain, literal, and grammatical meaning of the most unequivocal expressions, when it has been predetermined that all such notions are absurd, and incapable of being seriously held by men of learning and capacity. Thus it happens that men may be baptized, profess Christianity all their lives, and join in the common acts of the Established Christian commu-

nion, and yet constantly withstand, with all their might, what I call the *interior*, the *essentials*, the *marrow* of the Christian system.

Such persons would do well to scrutinize those parts of the history of the blessed Reformation which are scarcely touched upon by our most elegant and approved historians ; those scattered, but very authentic, precious memoirs, which lay open the secret, conscientious views of our first Reformers, concerning repentance, faith, sanctification—in short, concerning the salvation of the soul at the day of judgment. Such a laudable industry might, by the blessing of God, help to remove the veil from men's eyes, make them suspect that they had hitherto misunderstood the very material, the most material, article of the Reformation, and, by thus abating prejudices, pave the way for true conversion of heart, and true spiritual discernment.—No one, I conceive, can understand me to be here alluding to the Roman Catholic tenets of the Pope's supremacy, transubstantiation, the invocation of saints, and such like : in rejecting these absurdities and superstitions, we are all perfectly agreed : it is the doctrines of grace, which teach the way of acceptance with God

and of the formation of the true Christian character, on which I have my eye. These doctrines are the immediate and pressing concern of every individual, because his eternal happiness depends upon them ; and therefore, if these are not both distinctly stated and sedulously enforced by the Clergy, it is in vain to expect any effective or abiding improvement among the people, either in Christian faith or Christian morals.

It is on this account that I would to God the true nature of the Protestant Reformation were better understood, and particularly in the grand article respecting faith and works : for then the doctrinal Articles of our own Church, which are in perfect harmony with the sentiments of the best and wisest Reformers, would soon be better understood likewise ; controversies concerning their meaning would vanish apace ; the well-disposed, who had been educated in unfavourable circumstances, would be delivered from darkness into a marvellous light, and would receive the truth with a godly joy and thankfulness. This would be the cure of every unhappy departure from the Protestant faith : this would be the revival of Christian principles : this would put an

end to unlearned and injudicious declamation against Methodism, for Methodism would scarcely exist. It would soon be found, that neither illiterate enthusiasts, who by coarse allusions and intemperate language often, with the very best meanings, burlesque the most momentous doctrines; nor conceited philosophers of modern times, who, like their ancient brethren, can never relieve the horrors of a guilty conscience, nor make the wicked man turn away from his wickedness, by their insipid harangues on candour and humanity—it would soon be found, that neither open enemies, nor false friends, nor deluded brethren, could make much stand against the glorious and salutary truths of the Gospel, delivered by those properly commissioned to deliver them, with wisdom, animation, and affection. Then would our prayers be offered up not merely with the lips in the name of Jesus, but from the heart delivered up to its Redeemer and Sanctifier.

Such, in my judgment, have been the lamentable effects of long-continued prosperity on the *morals*, the *religious opinions*, and the *religious practice* of the inhabitants of this country at large.

On the dangers inseparable from a Papal

hierarchy, and also on the inestimable value of the Protestant Reformation, as now digested into our present ecclesiastical constitution, I have been induced to speak on this occasion more at large, and with the less reserve, for the following reasons :

1. Because the lessons which all Europe has recently had, respecting the incalculable mischiefs produced by the revolutionary visions of romantic theorists, have rendered it at this time less necessary to say much on the dangers of that sort of republican frenzy which appeared in the reign of Charles I.

2. Because I think it was the crying sin of the nation, about the time of those civil wars, neither to understand nor value as they ought the substantial blessings of their deliverance from Popery.

3. Because there is, I fear, abundant reason for serious apprehensions of a similar defect in our own time.

And now, to be more particular on this head. I own it is with much pain, and awful foreboding of consequences, that I have observed some of our wisest and most enlightened statesmen appear to entertain such sentiments of the present state of the Roman Catholic religion as to me are wholly

unaccountable, except on the hypothesis either of almost a total ignorance of both the religious and political parts of the Papal system; or, certainly, of an irreverent contempt and carelessness respecting the one, and a dangerous misconception of the other. Is it that we ourselves, according to the admonitions of our spiritual ruler above alluded to, have been defective in inculcating that branch of the Reformation which delivered us from the anti-Christian doctrine of the Romanists respecting the merit of works? If so, we may the less wonder that the academical education of our leading senators should not have sufficiently warned them of the mystery of iniquity which lurketh in this part of Popery. Or is it that the flimsy philosophical cast of the times, and the crafty insinuations of irreligious historians, may have contributed not a little to furnish their minds with an indifference or contempt for the very discussion of topics which they have been taught to consider rather as unnecessary metaphysical niceties, or perhaps as the squabbles of indolent theologians, than as great scriptural questions of the utmost importance to men's happiness here, and their salvation hereafter? Be these things as

they may, even though both these causes may have had their influence, it will but render the alarm the more necessary to be sounded by those who are convinced that Popery is still essentially the same; and that the great Saxon Reformer judged right, in pronouncing the doctrine of justification by faith to be the true index of a standing or a falling church.

There is, indeed, a species of aversion to Popery, which became so excessive in the minds of the low parties during the reign of Charles I. as to excite the most unreasonable suspicions and scrupulosities respecting the use of certain forms and ceremonies, perfectly indifferent in themselves. In support of this sort of zeal without knowledge I advance not one single word, fully convinced that it tended to increase the dissensions of those times exceedingly and unnecessarily; and the rather, as the ecclesiastical rulers themselves, from a spirit of contradiction, and perhaps of contempt for the prejudices of their adversaries, were much disposed to carry matters to the opposite extreme. On both sides, nothing could be more unwise, more impolitic, or more unchristian, than all this. Even common sense required then, as it does still,

that all matters of lesser moment should be mutually conceded, with candour and moderation; but that there should be an union of heart and hand in opposing, not the shadow, but the substance of Popery, throughout all its mischievous corruptions, both in the civil and the ecclesiastical constitution.

It has been said, with a positiveness and a confidence which, on a practical subject of the very last importance, I think nothing but the best information could authorise, that “to suppose the Roman Catholics of the present time to entertain the dangerous sentiments of their ancestors, were to believe old wives’ fables.”

The controversy in this matter may, I believe, be reduced within a very little compass. I say nothing of the follies, I confine myself altogether to the dangers, of Popery. The Romanists maintain not only the Pope of Rome’s supremacy, but also his dispensing power; and their clergy are sworn to do their utmost to extirpate heresy. Therefore, to effect their purposes, say what they will, do what they will, or take whatever oaths they may, the Pope and his substitutes, at any convenient moment, can in any one instant dis-

solve in the minds of such men every human obligation which the heart of man can conceive. In fact, it is well known that one of the conspirators in the business of the fifth of November, who escaped the hand of justice here, met with both commendation and reward at Rome ; nor can it be doubted but that, if their plot had succeeded, *that memorable day* would have been marked in Popish calendars as glorious and triumphant, as it is now in the Protestant for a day of Divine interposition and deliverance.

Such are the systematic doctrines and practices which render it unsafe for Protestant governments to trust any material power in the hands of the Romanists.

But, then, it is here said, “ These representations, at the present day, are absolutely fabulous, and altogether unworthy of the notice of wise men.” The answer is, If this indeed be so, if the objectionable doctrines of the Romanists have really terminated their disgraceful existence, every true Protestant will rejoice in the event of such a revolution, and be heartily disposed to allow them the utmost licence of rational toleration. He will, however, expect to have better proof of their

sincerity than the mere declarations, or even the signatures, of a few interested members of that communion, collected at suspicious moments and to serve particular purposes. You know that no people on earth are more completely under the dominion of their clergy, than the congregations of the Roman Catholics ; and you know also, that their clergy, *as a body*, have not relaxed or amended in any one syllable of their ancient most atrocious and detestable doctrines. And is it not, therefore, with a fearful astonishment that you hear it gravely affirmed in Parliament, that all the peculiarly odious, offensive, and dangerous parts of the Romish religion have long since been done away ?

Let me ask (*e. g.*), Do you believe that the numerous sanguinary decrees of the Pope and his Councils, which for so many years have been the disgrace of reason and humanity, are now actually repealed ? Do you believe that the Roman Catholic clergy, particularly those of Ireland, do now avow before all the world this revolution which is said to have taken place ? And do you seriously think that they are now instructing their deluded congregations in their new and reformed doctrines ? For-

give me : to believe these things would require a most uncommon portion of credulity ! Yet you would not deny that there may be several humane Deists, or half-Deists, nominally of the Romish communion, who may sincerely detest many both of the political doctrines and the scandalous practices of the Church of Rome ; and to their candid concessions, most probably, we are in part to ascribe the favourable impression concerning the present state of Popery made on the minds of several leading characters in our own country : but, surely, wise and watchful British senators will not suffer themselves to be ensnared by such partial and unsatisfactory professions ; surely they will examine, and even scrutinize, with an industrious and jealous attention, whether the great body, particularly the clerical body, of the existing modern Roman Catholics, are not themselves educated, and are at this moment educating their offspring, in precisely the same systematic plans of bigotry, persecution, contempt and hatred of Protestants, which caused their forefathers to be guilty of so many horrid plots and massacres.

Every source of information which you will take the pains to examine, furnishes fresh proofs

that I do not overstate this matter ; proofs that Popery continues substantially the same thing it ever was ; proofs that it only waits for opportunities to promote and sanction the same detestable attempts and purposes. Still, it is very far from my design to accuse the consciences of every Roman Catholic, as though they were loaded with the guilt of intended persecutions, plots, and cruel barbarities. What I affirm, and verily believe, is this,---that, such is the *nature* of the Romish religion, that its votaries are constantly in a state of preparation for these things ; and that probably, without supposing many of them to be aware of it, they are fitted, *well fitted*, to be the ready tools and instruments of bold tyrants, crafty priests, or enterprising bigots and fanatics, at any moment they are wanted : and, moreover, that these disciplined engines of destruction, like the barrels of gunpowder which they well know how to employ, are not the less dangerous because their outward appearance is harmless, and because the combustible trains that connect them are at present invisible. I venture, therefore, to add, that, as we are perfectly aware of the latent mischief of these principles, we must, I think, be altogether inex

cusable if we do not effectually guard against them in future.

Yet God forbid we should harbour the smallest degree of unchristian animosity towards any of our fellow-creatures, of whatever persuasion they may be ! Let our abhorrence be always not of the men, but of the cruel, unrelenting principles in which the Romanists are steadily educated. From the ruinous operation of *these*, may Almighty God protect us ! and be it our earnest prayer, that (as one very material mean of protection) He would be pleased to give our senators wisdom ! The history of mankind does not furnish instances of a more common or more severe scourge of Divine Providence, than the infatuation of the councils of princes and governors ; and I may truly add, that such infatuations have usually taken place in times of great wealth, great power, and extent of empire,—that is, in times of great prosperity.

To conclude. Very few words may now satisfy the second branch of this discourse. If it be true that long-continued prosperity, numerous victories by sea and land, extraordinary and even miraculous deliverances from imminent dangers, have been

followed by a sad depravation of our morals, a dangerous relaxation and practical corruption of doctrine, with a disposition to undervalue the inestimable blessings of the Reformation, and perhaps to adopt rash and hazardous counsels in matters where the very existence of Protestant liberty is immediately concerned, the wisest measures we *can* adopt *must be* to follow the advice of the text—namely, to wait for God now in his *judgments*, and at length to learn righteousness. That the judgments of God have been for some time past, and are now, manifestly in the earth, no Christian, I think, can deny. Whether, indeed, any chastisement has actually happened to this highly-favoured country, severe enough to be denominated a judgment, may possibly be matter of dispute with some ; but there is not one who will deny that adversities, misfortunes, dangers, and difficulties, always present the most favourable opportunities for individual as well as national improvement in religion and morals : and, therefore, whether the dealings of Almighty God with this country be considered on the whole as having amounted to *judgments*, or not, the inference must be, that this is indeed the critical time for us to

learn righteousness. For, surely, notwithstanding many wonderful and unexampled successes, our prospects, on the whole, are now such as to cause the most awful apprehensions that, in future, God for our sins is about to withhold, if not to withdraw, that bountiful hand which has so long enriched these dominions with a profusion of blessings of various kinds : surely enough has already taken place to make us search, and try, and examine, whether we have not for many years past abused the goodness and patience of God, and suffered riches and power and might to blind our eyes and harden our hearts ! Who can tell whether God may not still be entreated for the land, and still continue to be gracious in these seasons of peril, provided we do but look on the present gloomy appearances as awful threatenings, or at least as merciful intimations of the Divine displeasure, and permit them to produce their intended effect of leading us to repentance ? I would gladly hope, that at a moment when the people cannot but begin to suspect it possible that they may, before very long time has elapsed, be deprived of some of their wealth, strength, and independence, they may be more disposed to listen to the voice of reason and

religion, than during the long periods in which they have been wallowing in ease, luxury, and security.

Perhaps no part of the Divine character is more frequently exemplified in the government of the world, than his slowness to anger, long forbearance, compassion, and unwillingness to afflict the children of men. “As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth.” It seems as if it were the plan of the Almighty (with reverence be it spoken) to afford his sinful creatures many opportunities of repentance and amendment in their enjoyment of prosperity, before he has recourse to the severer dispensations of affliction and chastisement. Usually, it is not till ingratitude and hardness of heart have filled up the measure of mens’ iniquity, that the signals of the Divine anger are displayed; and even then God does not forget to be gracious. Sometimes he only threatens: at other times his wrath endures but for the twinkling of an eye; and it seems as if, in great mercy and compassion, he repented of the evil; and as if he was willing to suspend the punishment, and melt the heart of the offender with fresh instances of unmerited goodness and beneficence. The historical parts of the Bible through-

out illustrate these things; and the instances produced in this discourse, relative to our own country, are altogether of the same class. Thus, it is impossible to mistake the language of Providence in the reign of Charles I. The murder of the king, the demolition of the whole British constitution in church and state, and the entire loss of all our liberties, were surely as clear and expressive indications of the Divine displeasure, as could be exhibited by the Almighty to his creatures. But who can tell what the consequences would have been on the hearts of the people, had it pleased God to continue this afflictive and angry dispensation? Would they have returned to their offended Maker, in penitential dust and ashes? Would they have acknowledged the goodness of God in having delivered them, not very long before, from an inveterate system of ecclesiastical tyranny and corruption; and still later, in having removed from them a cruel and superstitious queen, polluted with the blood of the best Protestants? Would the reflection on the then recent event of the Gunpowder Plot have taught them, that neither the greatest aggregate of accumulated earthly blessings, nor the most industrious human

precaution, can secure stability and duration to our enjoyments, unless the Lord be on our side, and as a merciful father protect his children? Lastly, would they have deeply lamented their manifest abuse of the inestimable treasures of the Reformation—some, for having encouraged a factious and contentious spirit about trifles; others, for having exhibited a haughty, domineering, and licentious conduct, to the great mortification and discouragement of the best men of all ranks and orders?

Almighty God, who knows the hearts of men, can *only* tell how these things *would* have been; and whether in the way of his judgments the inhabitants of this land would have waited on him and learnt righteousness. What we *do* know, is, that the whole is an awful lesson to *us*. God, in his great mercy to our forefathers, *did* remove the uplifted rod suddenly and unexpectedly: and the usual sad effects of prosperity quickly took place, in the reign of Charles II.—licentious and irreligious principles, with their natural concomitant, an immoral practice, pervaded ALL RANKS AND ORDERS, from the court to the cottage.

The succeeding periods of English history

furnish reflections, differing from these rather in circumstances and degree, than in their nature and substance. Through a succession of ages, it is plain, that to the Lord our God have belonged mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God to walk in his ways. Moreover, it is, I think, undeniable, that the present afflictive visitations of this country are remarkably less severe than those of the neighbouring nations: yet to conclude that these are sinners *above us, because they suffer such things*, would be a most dangerous and unwarrantable inference:—dangerous, because destructive of humiliation, of gratitude, of repentance; unwarrantable, because our Saviour rebukes every suggestion of this sort, in the most distinct and peremptory language. “I tell you nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. I tell you, beware of supposing yourselves better than others because they have suffered such things; there may be vengeance for you yet in store: I tell you, that *all* these calamities are on account of sin. Rest satisfied, that none suffer more than they deserve; and profit by the warning, that ye, who now suffer less than

those Galileans whom ye think sinners above others, will likewise (except ye repent) inevitably perish."

Instead, therefore, of encouraging vain and presumptuous comparisons of ourselves with the neighbouring nations who have suffered so exceedingly, how much wiser must it be, how abundantly *safer*, how inexpressibly more becoming a people who have been unprofitable servants amidst many superior opportunities and advantages, who have long turned a deaf ear to numerous warnings, and who are existing monuments of the Divine mercy, now at length, when God's judgments are so manifestly in the earth, to search and try their ways, and turn unto the Lord, lest a worse thing happen unto them ! It is expressly said, that when men's ways please the Lord, he maketh even their enemies to be at peace with them. Our present ways, I fear, do not please the Lord. It is true, we have with great propriety been repeatedly called upon to express publicly our contrition by prayers and fastings, and our gratitude by praises and thanksgivings; nevertheless, nothing can be plainer to my mind, than that the root of the evil is not yet touched.

The anger of God is not yet turned away; his hand is stretched out still: and for any thing we know, we may, after all, be numbered among those sons of men described in the book of Ecclesiastes, “ whose hearts are fully set in them to do evil, because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily.”—In the book of Psalms, the same sentiments are expressed a little differently: it is there said, that if a man will not turn, “ He hath bent his bow and made it ready:” and there are many other portions of Scripture of like import; which appear to me to denote a very awful, but precious, interval of time afforded to sinful men, before the infliction of some heavy judgments, when patience is worn out by long contempt and neglect of repeated merciful admonitions. I call it a *precious* interval, because, if rightly used, it may be the mean of averting the intended blow—an *awful* interval, because it implies the suspension of the Divine indignation, and, as it were, the boundary of exhausted patience.

Reflections of this sort are not without their terrors to serious persons, the most free from enthusiasm, and of the greatest strength of mind.

And in my feeble opinion, this country has much reason both for fear and for hope. God delighteth to shew mercy, but God will not be mocked : what a man persists in sowing, sooner or later he must reap : and when I consider how long the Divine judgments have been abroad, I tremble at the threatening recorded in the book of Proverbs, “ He that, being often reprovèd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be cut off, and that without remedy.”

We have, no doubt, many evils to answer for, besides those briefly hinted at in this discourse ; yet, would we be willing to retrace and amend our backslidings, even in those points only which have been mentioned, and join hand in hand as one man, with the exertion of every nerve for this purpose, I think a very considerable reformation could not fail to take place very soon among us. The essentials of Christianity, as interpreted by the ecclesiastical system of our own church, would then be kept less in the back ground ; they would become prominent parts of our sermons ; they would be struck deep into the understandings of the hearers, and be firmly retained by their memories. The labours of our teachers would be-

come a service less of the lips and more of the heart; and an affectionate concern for the salvation of their congregations would appear in all they did and said. This improvement in instructing, accompanied with more holy examples of life and conversation, would infallibly be followed with an improvement both in the religion and morals of the people at large. Religious, economical, and decorous regulations in families, would become frequent; and these could not fail to enure young persons to laudable habits, both of external propriety and substantial virtue; and then our universities might hope to commence and support a more strict and salutary discipline, the blessed effects of which would in a very few years be seen and felt throughout every corner of these dominions in a variety of ways—for example, the observance of the Sabbath, the annihilation of gaming-houses, and houses of ill fame, and numerous assemblies of dissipation, luxury, and profaneness. These things are fanciful and visionary in no other respect than as it is to be feared men will continue to love darkness, after *all that can be said*, rather than light, *because their deeds are evil*.

Otherwise, can any good reason be given why, among several revivals of useful learning, the beauties of that bright luminary, the Reformation from Popery, should not at length, though late, emerge from that obscurity in which it has long been involved ; and be again esteemed, admired, and studied systematically as an important branch of the liberal education of every Protestant ? Then, and perhaps not till then, we may expect more to be done towards rooting up even the remains of Popery in these dominions. God forbid I should mean in the way of revenge and retaliation, or in the use of fire and sword, or of any other weapons than those only which belong to the real church of God — namely, the weapons of reason, instruction, and the written word ! Had these weapons been used judiciously and steadily since the Reformation in the reign of Edward VI. with the true spirit of Christian soldiers—supported, as they might easily have been, all along with Protestant labourers, both as schoolmasters and preachers, under the direction and patronage of our civil government—it is not, I think, too much to say, that Popery might, long before the

present time, have been at a very low ebb in Ireland, and scarcely had any existence in Britain.

It was a wretched symptom of the character of the French national assembly, in the beginning of their late revolutions, that, with all the enlightened policy of which they so much boasted, they could nevertheless vote the Roman Catholic religion to be the religion of the state. Unquestionably this did not proceed from a spirit of reform as to the bad parts of their national religion, but of contempt for all religion whatever, considered in any other light than merely as an engine of government. Strange! that in their unbounded rage for novelty they should have judged it proper to preserve this most deformed and disgraceful relic of ancient corruptions; and still stranger, that in our own country, senators of considerable distinction should have been found, who could admire those wonderful prodigies of political and religious sagacity! However, on the schemes of such inconsistent, profane, and impious legislators, no durability, no Divine blessings, were to be expected.

That the cruel, hypocritical tyrant, who at present rules that unhappy country, and scourges so large a portion of Europe, should support and establish Popery wherever he can, appears to me perfectly intelligible. Popery is an engine of immense power, easy motion, extensive and flexible application; and therefore on these accounts wonderfully adapted to his systematic purposes of conquest and domination. It can pretend every thing that is generous, devout, and sanctified—can throw aside the veil at any instant, and become cruel, barbarous, and unfaithful. Ever keeping steadily in view its own aggrandisement, it is ready to sanctify any means for the sake of the end, and is always ready to relieve, by plenary indulgences, complete absolutions, and sure passports to heaven, such tender consciences as cannot away with gross deceptions or mental reservations.

The present crafty ruler of France is so well aware of these things, that I know not whether this country has not more to fear from his silent machinations in Ireland, than from his numerous cannon and bayonets. It would be the height of presumption in me to pretend to instruct those

who are at the helm of affairs, in what manner they may best avert the impending storm ; yet to whisper a caution in the most respectful terms, against reposing too much confidence in Roman Catholic professions, may be found to have its uses in these perilous times. The more diligently this subject is considered, the more urgent will the necessity of this caution appear, and the more clearly founded in reason and justified by experience.

After all, the impression with which I would wish the minds of every one of us (even from the throne to the lowest subject) to be most deeply affected, is, that, notwithstanding the wisest cautions we can use or devise, unless the Lord keep the city the watchman waketh but in vain. However, this great practical truth does not render labours, warnings, and an incessant watchfulness on our part, the less necessary : and therefore, with every loyal subject of the country, I would rejoice, with thanksgiving to Almighty God, that in the present awful conjuncture we are blessed with a Prince on the throne whose sensibility and firmness on Protestant questions have already

shewn themselves to be admirably proportioned to the emergency of the circumstances. The most bitter and cruel of all the adversaries of Charles I., is known to have declared, that that unfortunate prince would have (as he has expressed it) fooled all his enemies, if he had but had the resolution to abide by his own judgment, rather than that of others. And it is, if I mistake not, owing to the full possession, and in a very high degree, of the quality directly opposite to the infirmity of that ill-advised and irresolute monarch, that our present justly beloved Sovereign, conscious of the integrity of his intentions, and well informed of the duties of his high station, has been enabled to conduct himself through a long and eventful reign with so much honour to himself and advantage to his people. With the fear of God before his eyes in deliberation, and with a humble hope of the Divine support in decision and in action, he has exhibited to the nations, in seasons of peculiar difficulty and danger, a long and steady exercise of justice, vigour, and circumspection. Under his mild government, it is true, some have complained; but it would be

hard to produce an instance of any one who has suffered in the least of his just rights; and it is the universal prayer of his loyal subjects, that Almighty God may be pleased to protect his valuable life, and prolong his venerable old age.

SERMON II.

MARK ii. 27, 28.

And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath : Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.

THE words of this text, relating entirely to the Sabbath, and explaining the spirit of the Divine institution, will perhaps be better understood when considered in connection with some other passages of Scripture, which belong to the same subject. For I purpose in this discourse to illustrate, in as plain a manner as possible, the Scripture history and doctrine of the great duty of observing the Sabbath day. And when I shall have put together the various lights which can be collected respecting it, it will be proper in the next place to exhort this audience, and enforce the duty on their minds in a practical manner.

The profanation of the Sabbath is so common, and so glaring; and the views of many persons concerning it are so low, and so limited to mere prudential considerations, and have in them so little of the fear of God, and so little recognition of the Divine authority; that it cannot be deemed inexpedient, by any pious character, to have the grounds of the duty reviewed from time to time from the pulpit.

The foundation of this institution we have in the second chapter of the book of Genesis. No sooner were the heavens and the earth finished, and God had completed his glorious work of six days, and had rested on the seventh day from all his work, than God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that on that day he had rested from all his work which God had created and made. So that no institution can possibly carry more evidence of Divine authority than this does. The Sabbath is a *blessed, holy* day, made so by God himself. The Creator rested in it from his work; and man, his creature, is ordered to rest also, after His example, that he may commemorate the work of creation, and give himself entirely to the devout contemplation of

his Maker, and prepare himself for holding that communion with him in love and gratitude which is the true rest of the human soul.

Some have *fancied* that this institution was not to have its effect from the beginning ; but that it was delivered only in anticipation, as it were, of the Jewish Sabbath published by Moses a long time afterwards. But I may well denominate such a notion by the term *fancy*, for there is not a syllable said to give countenance to it. And I could just as soon believe that the world was not created according to the Bible narrative, or that the sun did not shine as soon as it was made, as that the seventh day was not sanctified for the use of man. From the moment that there was a man upon earth, it was the will of God that a seventh part of his time should be immediately consecrated to His service.

God rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made, and blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.—Take notice: the holy pen of inspiration perpetually condescends to speak in a way that may be intelligible to the poor limited comprehensions of our slender faculties. The work of creation was no labour to Almighty

God; and therefore the ending of it, strictly speaking, could be no *rest* to Him. Yet as the creation of the world is communicated to us in the view of an employment of six days' work, the idea is kept up and supported: so that the ceasing from what had been called the labour of creating, is of course called a resting from the labour.

Every word used on this occasion shews that the Sabbath was made for *man*. For God himself is eternally at rest in his own incomprehensible nature; and therefore, when He is said to have rested, blest and sanctified the seventh day, all this is to be understood as relative to man. Life and blessing will attend the man who observes the Sabbath. The Sabbath of rest is a continual lesson to him to turn his eye from all created objects, and look to that heavenly rest into which God is entered, and which is promised to man.

These observations derive much additional strength from this reflection,—that the Sabbath was given to Adam *before* his fall; when he was in paradise; when he stood before God in innocence and the perfection of his nature, and was pronounced very good. For, surely, when God

pronounced all the parts of his creation very good, we must not except that part which indeed was the glory of the creation, and was made in the likeness of God himself.

Add to this, the law of the Sabbath, or Lord's-day, is the very first command given by God; and can any man support the thought for a moment, that the *first command*, just after the creation was finished, should not have been a matter of very great import? The more ye reflect on this single circumstance, the more will ye be disposed to give weight and seriousness to the injunction of the Sabbath. If the law of a Sabbath, an injunction to sanctify the seventh part of his time, was necessary to an innocent creature—necessary to preserve his innocence, and secure his happiness; to remind him of his state of dependence, his infirmities and necessary imperfections—how abundantly more necessary must be such an ordinance in our present degenerate condition and alienation from God?—Such is the force of the argument: If God in his wisdom and good will to man, thought proper to direct that a considerable portion of the time of the first man, newly made, and at the moment when every thing that was

made was very good, should be dedicated to pious contemplation and devout services, surely the reason is now become manifold greater, since all flesh have corrupted themselves, fallen from God, and become naturally indisposed to their true happiness. In one word, I could never believe, that, if man in his original innocent and holy state was thus under the discipline of the Sabbath day as a duty, he should now be released from the observance of that duty, when the reason for it is so much stronger, the expediency of such an appointment is so much greater, and the wants and necessities and dangers of man are so dreadfully increased and multiplied.

This would not savour of the wisdom and goodness of God, as a Moral Governor of the world :
And,

Further, Neither is it God's way to leave in doubt or ambiguity such matters as are of great practical moment to his creatures.

Accordingly, we find that Almighty God renewed to the Jews, long afterwards, the establishment of the Sabbath, and under circumstances the most awful and memorable. You know that it was in thunder from Mount Sinai that the Fourth

Commandment was given to the Jews, “ *Remember* the Sabbath, to keep it holy !”—No doubt, every one of the Commandments might with great propriety begin with the word *Remember* ; but as this circumstance is peculiar to the Fourth Commandment in the code, it is sufficiently plain that the Jews were called upon to observe the Sabbath day as an ancient ordinance. For not only is this Commandment introduced with the significant word *Remember*, but the very same reason also for observing the Sabbath day is given in the Fourth Commandment which is given in the second chapter of Genesis—viz. that “ in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day : wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.” Remember, therefore, the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

I consider it as a very instructive piece of Scripture history, that Almighty God, in his goodness and compassion to the Israelites, was induced to work an extraordinary miracle before their eyes in the wilderness, as a solemn warning not to break the Sabbath day. No Israelite, you remember, was to gather manna on the Sabbath day, but they

were to gather a double portion every sixth day ; and when some of them, through curiosity or perverseness, chose to try the experiment whether the manna would not keep on *any two* days, it is said, it bred worms and stank ; but what they gathered on the sixth day in the morning, did not do so.

It is a melancholy mark of the state of the principles of any nation, when the people place nothing to the account of God's approbation of their conduct ; when they suppose that they are just as likely to thrive and prosper whether they disobey or whether they obey the commandments of the Lord. I well remember, when, in the commencement of the wild reveries of the late French Revolutionists, some political calculators among our own countrymen prognosticated the most dreadful consequences to these dominions from the single consideration of the abolition of the Sabbath by that infatuated people. Here, said they, is a steady and perpetual increase of property from an additional seventh part of the labour of the multitude : such an increase as this, from the bulk of a nation, must infallibly produce a preponderancy of wealth and power, which as a rival nation it will be impossible for us to contend with. I shall not stop

to dissect the miserable defects, obvious enough, in this political arithmetic, but only just observe, what fairly belongs to the pulpit to notice, how entirely the fear of God, the love of God, the blessings of God, and of his superintending providence, are entirely neglected in these wretched calculations.

Alas ! it should seem there always have been persons who placed nothing to the credit of obedience towards God and his laws, but have concluded the value of that time entirely lost which was employed in his service instead of being made sensibly productive in some worldly occupation. But one might put these wretched worldlings in mind — such as think the Sabbath thrown away, and would gladly use that day as other days for the purposes of traffic and gain from the active labour of their dependants—that they may possibly prove themselves miserable accomptants in this way. Can they support a confidence that He in whose hands are the issues of life and death will prosper them in such Sabbath-day occupations? Are they sure that their double portion of gains will not breed worms and grow putrid?—We read, in the prophet Haggai, of some farmers who

sowed a great deal and brought in little, had not even meat and drink sufficient for their wants, nor clothes to keep them warm, and who put their wages into a bag full of holes. This emphatical language shews that all went wrong with them, on account of their disobedience to God—and it is not easy to point out a case of general disobedience where this is more likely to happen, than in Sabbath breaking.

To all this cloud of evidence in support of the Divine institution of the Sabbath, and of its great importance, I do but see one solitary objection which can be opposed, or can at all disturb the conclusions we would draw: I mean, the change of the day from the seventh to the first day of the week under the Christian dispensation. Now, though a strict and impartial examination will, I think, shew that there is nothing in this objection, yet, unhappily, the spirit of profaneness, so natural to man, has taken advantage of this circumstance to discountenance the idea of the Divinity of the institution, and to reduce it to a matter of mere worldly prudence.

If I might be allowed to speak plainly on this subject, I would say, that I think men have given

too great a discursive liberty to their imaginations in this inquiry, and that they would arrive at much more satisfactory conclusions by putting together, and seriously considering, what is *quite certain* in this matter. I will briefly explain my meaning as follows.—

We have seen, that,

1. It is quite certain that God sanctified the seventh day immediately after the creation :—and, therefore, this was before the Jewish or any other dispensation had taken place.

2. It is quite certain that man was at that time innocent, and loving the blessed God with all his heart, and holding communion with him : and though after his fall, and the entrance of sin into the world, we are not so sure that he *always* actually employed the Sabbath-day in a manner altogether agreeable to its nature and institution, yet we can have little doubt but that he must have felt his mind under obligation to observe it all his days, and that he would teach his children the same lesson. The ground of his obligation to Sabbath duties did not belong to this or to that dispensation—not to Jew, not to Gentile—but to himself as a man, resulting from

his connection with his Creator: agreeably to the text, The Sabbath was made for man.

3. We hear nothing more of the Sabbath in the Bible till we find the Israelites in the Wilderness, and Moses addressing them thus: "To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord....Lay up what remains, to be kept till morning." Then in the morning he saith, "Eat that to-day; for to-day is a Sabbath unto the Lord: ye shall not find the manna in the field: Six days ye shall gather it, but on the seventh day ye shall find none."

Now here it is very remarkable, that not one word is said of the week; of the first or seventh day of the week. All that you can collect is, that they were to gather the manna six days, and make a Sabbath of the seventh.

Nothing can be more uncertain, than any opinion, which we may attempt to form, whether the Israelites, before their bondage in Egypt, had preserved an uniform and regular account of the first day of the week, reckoning from the creation of the world; or, rather, the thing appears to be extremely improbable. And in regard to their keeping such an account during their bondage

in Egypt, there is almost positive proof that they had absolutely lost the weekly reckoning. Not only the circumstances of their bondage, consisting in harsh treatment and in compulsion to labour, but the long absence of Moses in Midian, and the want of all religious observances, exclude the probability of the Sabbath being kept up among them while they remained in that idolatrous country.

4. Another thing is to be mentioned as quite certain in this inquiry—namely, That the revival of the observance of the Sabbath by Moses, called the Jewish Sabbath, was expressly declared to be in commemoration of the deliverance of the children of Israel from their Egyptian taskmasters. Thus : “ That thy man-servant and maid-servant may rest as well as thou ”——and, “ Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm :— *therefore* the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day.”

This language of Moses, as recorded in Deut. v., is in no respect obscure. It is as though he had said, “ It is highly proper that ye should com-
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morate your delivery from slavery. Ye have had hard bondage in Egypt for many years, and it has been utterly out of your power to observe the ancient Sabbath. Ye have had no rest from your labours on any day, much less on every seventh day. But now it is your duty to keep the Sabbath again : let us therefore, in our commemoration of the rest which God has given us from the Egyptian oppressions, reckon from the day in which we came up from the Red Sea, the day when our oppressors were buried in the waters, and we went through on dry land. In this manner let the Sabbath day be fixed. The precise number of days and weeks that have elapsed since the creation, has long been lost ; but the proportion of resting and of working days is well known and remembered from the first creation of the world : Almighty God from the very first directed that men should labour six days, and rest on the seventh day."

5. Still further.—The Fourth Commandment itself is expressed in terms that entirely harmonize with this view of the Sabbath. The Jews could never have determined from the Fourth Commandment on what day their first Sabbath was to be kept.

It says, Six days shalt thou labour, and on the seventh thou shalt rest: which implies no more than that, after six days' labour, the seventh was to be a day of rest, and to be kept holy. Therefore I maintain, that, in the sense of the Fourth Commandment, the Christian Sabbath is as much the seventh day as the Jewish Sabbath was the seventh day. It is kept after six days' labour, as that was; and it is the seventh day, reckoning from the beginning of our first working day, as well as their Sabbath was the seventh day, reckoning from the beginning of their first working day.

Moreover, the reason given in the Fourth Commandment why there should be *six working days* and then a resting day, is a reason which remains in full force under the Christian dispensation—namely, because God himself set the example of working six days in the creation of the world, and then resting on the seventh day. It is in the *proportion* of our time—viz. one part out of seven—dedicated to rest and to sacred purposes, in which the essence of the Commandment consists: the day when we begin to compute, abstractedly considered, is of very little consequence. There

may, indeed, be circumstances sufficient for the determination of the commencement of the Sabbath day; nor can any thing be conceived more satisfactory than the account I have just given of the commencement of the Jewish Sabbath, at its revival, on account of the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea. They adhered to the Divine original institution of six days of labour and one of rest—and on their first day of rest they commemorated their deliverance from slavery. The real day being lost, in all probability, it must then have undergone a change. The shadow was of no moment, when the substance was preserved.

The very same things may be said of the Christian Sabbath: The real day of the week, reckoning from the creation, had long been utterly unknown, and was probably irrecoverably lost; and it was changed again, for reasons worthy of being engraved on the heart of every grateful, rejoicing Christian—viz. the resurrection of our Lord from the dead,—his victory and triumph over death and sin, and his rising again for our justification. But never forget, that no change whatever was made in the principle on which the original

commandment rested ; which commandment, by its appointment, was divine, substantial, reasonable, and important in its very essence, and evidently founded on the relation in which man, as a dependent creature, stood to his Maker and Benefactor from the first moment of his existence.

These views, my brethren, of the holy Sabbath, I have thought proper to lay before you, as considerations which, after much attention to the subject, have long appeared abundantly satisfactory to my own mind. I have been the more disposed to rest in them, as absolutely conclusive in supporting all the great practical purposes of the Sabbath-day, because they not only establish the Divine institution of it, but also harmonize completely with every additional argument that can be produced in favour of that Christian Sabbath which we, as believers in Jesus, profess to observe. Thus, when it is once ascertained that the Sabbath is of Divine appointment, and that its essence consists in the dedication of one-seventh part of our existence to the service of God, the care of the soul, and the cultivation of the purest and warmest religious affections, and that all this rests on the

very first commandment which God ever gave to man, there cannot possibly be either impropriety or inconsistency in changing the resting day in order to commemorate any great event in which mankind may be essentially concerned. So, the Jews had their Sabbath fixed, as we have seen, to the commemoration of their deliverance from the Egyptians; and in regard to us, surely the redemption of the world by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ stands so prominently the most important event which ever took place since the beginning of time, that Christians could never entertain a moment's doubt as to the day they should set apart as a holy Sabbath of rest and thanksgiving.

I will endeavour to render my meaning still more clear by an appropriate example. Suppose for a moment, that any sensible Heathen, or Gentile as he is called, was made to understand from the Bible, that Almighty God (*immediately* after the creation of man) had been pleased to reveal His will, very positively and distinctly, that He expected one seventh of his time to be dedicated to holy purposes;—that He who made man, and knew what was in man; He who best knew

man's wants, and necessities, and imperfections, had allowed him six parts of his time for his own business, but had enjoined the seventh part of it not to be employed in his usual work, but to be a time of rest from ordinary labour, and to be employed in God's holy service ;—and that it was at the man's peril if he encroached on that portion of time so separated and marked out from the rest : —Let us now further suppose, that the aforesaid Heathen, or Gentile, with this clear impression on his mind of the sacred duty of dedicating one seventh of his time to Almighty God, is afterwards introduced to the Christian scheme of salvation, and by God's blessing is led (like the Eunuch whom Philip instructed) to comprehend the Jewish and prophetic histories, and, in one word, the nature of redemption by Christ; and to rest his soul upon it, to enter into it by baptism, and rejoice in the hope set before him :—I ask, whether such a man, utterly unprejudiced as to any particular Sabbath day, and finding it absolutely impossible to give even a plausible reason from history for supposing that the seventh day on which God rested at all tallied with what we now call the seventh day ; and, moreover, concluding, by

his own good sense, that the import of the command could not by any rational interpretation be extended beyond the idea of merely one-seventh part:—can any thing be imagined more natural, or better founded in good sense and sound argumentation, than that this Christian Gentile—or I might add, even Christian Jew—should instantly be disposed to fix his first Sabbath, the beginning of his rest, *that* day which was to settle and determine all his future Sabbaths, so as that it should be in commemoration of the glorious deliverance of mankind from the power of sin and death by the resurrection of his Redeemer, the Son of God, whose victory and triumph was then complete?

In this way of viewing the Christian Sabbath, it remains quite certain that it is of Divine institution: the arguments for its establishment are thus completely separated from every thing that is ambiguous or doubtful; and yet we retain, at the same time, the full advantage of all those secondary considerations which have weight in this inquiry. Among which, the uniform practice of Christians from the primitive times is ever to be remembered as a circumstance of great con-

sequence ; also their well-known meetings on the first day of the week, recorded in the New Testament ; and lastly, the very remarkable expression of St. John in the Revelation, who calls it the Lord's-day.

And now, my Christian brethren, it is high time that in what remains of this discourse I should speak more directly in application to your hearts and consciences ; and I pray God that I may be enabled to address them in a manner calculated for spiritual improvement. On the origin of the Sabbath, and the Divinity of its institution, I have certainly been led to speak more at large than I had at first intended. It has long been growing into fashion to treat of religion, and particularly of the Sabbath, too much as a sort of state engine, and as resting merely on reasons of prudence and expediency. To myself, therefore, I seem to gain a very considerable point when I shew the Sabbath, even the Christian Sabbath, to be a commandment positively made known to us as the will of God himself, and therefore most indubitably originating in substantial reasons. Good men, and even mere moralists, have given many fair and probable reasons on this subject ; but I

have forborne to detain you much with the enumeration of these, because, with all pious believers in their Bibles, the matter is at once cut short as soon as ever it is made out that *it is the will of God*. Lastly, another reason, which may have drawn me to a greater length in the treatment of the argumentative part of this subject, may be, that though it has been handled both by Churchmen and Dissenters with great ability, insomuch as almost to exhaust every source of argument, yet as every one, who gives his thoughts to such a subject seriously, and is not a mere follower of those who have gone before him, will have his own peculiar way of managing an argument, I have industriously endeavoured to select and arrange materials so as to place them in the most luminous point of view ; and though they are not managed precisely in the way in which any writer that I have seen has managed them, they will be found, nevertheless, I hope, treated so as to possess the greatest force, and to be open to the least and the fewest objections.

Then, if these things are really so—if you have felt the force of my reasoning as I have proceeded along, building all my argument on the Scripture

as the foundation—it will be your wisdom and your duty to look upon a preacher enforcing from the pulpit the observance of the Sabbath-day, as pleading the cause of God himself in a business of immense importance, where both his glory and your own eternal interests are deeply concerned. Never suppose that a preacher can derive any real satisfaction from finding fault: whenever he finds fault, he knows very well that so far his audience are not likely to be pleased with him; and nothing in the world can encourage a faithful instructor to encounter the dislikes of any part of his audience, except a strong sense of duty, and the prospect of doing good by laying open men's danger, and exhorting them to repentance.

In the good hope and fair prospect of doing some good, I have this morning endeavoured to throw light on the nature of the institution of the Sabbath, the evidences of the divinity of the institution, and the duties inseparable from it; and I would gladly hope that I cannot fail, with God's blessing, to have reached the understanding of all attentive and considerate hearers who believe their Bibles; and that, in consequence, they are now actually resolving to be in future more zealous,

and diligent, and exact in keeping the Sabbath. In all religious practice, I consider both *light* and *warmth* as equally necessary : light in the understanding, warmth in the affections. It is a lamentable truth, that there may be light, and a great deal too, in the understanding, and little or no warmth in the heart. Perhaps never does the sun shine so bright and clear as in some cold days of winter. So, again, there may be warmth without light : there may be even heat in the affections ; but if there be not light to guide them, if there be not the written word of God, which St. Peter calls the more sure word of prophecy, all will be delusion and enthusiasm. No man that ever lived shewed more zeal and fire towards God than Elijah did, and often at the hazard of his life ; yet neither the strong wind that rent the mountains, nor the earthquake and fire that succeeded it, appear to have excited so much of his attention as did the still small voice of the Lord : for it is said, “ the Lord was neither in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire.”

But to return to the application of this subject to the minds and consciences of my hearers.

It is far from being improbable that several

here present may be disposed to ask, ' what defect can possibly be found in all those who are present, and evidently keeping the Sabbath ; and who, by their appearance at church on this sacred day, prove that they do not disregard the commandment of God ?

To such persons I answer : The appearance, as far as that goes, is undoubtedly favourable ; and the more so, when one has the agreeable opportunity of observing a large congregation conducting themselves throughout the service with an attentive and reverent deportment. Alas ! there are but too many who practise breaking the Sabbath in the most flagrant sense of that impiety, and by their absence from this place afford one no opportunity of addressing them. Such unhappy beings live only to neglect and profane the Sabbath. To them, the returns of the Sabbath serve only as so many aggravations of their rebellion against God ; and, instead of preparing them for death and judgment, become so many heavy additions to their condemnation and punishment. I have no opportunity of speaking to their consciences ; they fly from reproof : otherwise they should hear my voice against them in the cause of God, on account

of their profanation of the Sabbath, whether by their indolence or trifling, travelling unnecessarily, looking over their books, writing unnecessary letters, impertinent and useless visiting, vain and foolish conversation, or pleasurable walks and amusements, and such like.

You, my friends, come to church, it is true ; and so far, I have acknowledged, it is very well. But take care, and do not lay too much stress on the single circumstance of appearance at church. Examine yourselves narrowly where your hearts are ; for, you know, there is such a thing as honouring God with the lips, when the heart is far from him. And if you ask me why I must be so scrupulous and so suspicious as to make such an unkind supposition respecting any who are present, I must answer, because “ the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ;” because the heart deceives *itself* as well as others ; and because nothing is so common, as to be content with a form of godliness without the power of it. The Jews of old, in our Saviour’s time, observed the rules of the Sabbath with even an over-rigorous exactness, according to the tradition of the Scribes and Pharisees, but were not at all

inclined to make a spiritual use of it, according to the precious direction of the Prophet Isaiah : “ If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable ; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words ; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord ; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob.” No : the religion of the Jews at that time was become all form and punctilio ; without heart, without love either to God or man. We all know how they found fault with our blessed Lord for healing on the Sabbath-day. Nay, even in the days of the Maccabees, a number of Jews chose rather to be cut to pieces, than to defend themselves against their heathen adversaries on that day ; till, on serious reflection, and the exercise of that good sense and discretion for which the Maccabees were distinguished as well as for true piety and the noblest love of their country, they determined, that if in future they should be attacked by their enemies, they would defend themselves on that day.—

Our Lord himself cured diseases on that day, and also justified a relaxation from the too rigid observance of the Sabbath on a principle of necessity, when he defended his disciples, impelled as they then were by hunger, for plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath-day. These things prove, no doubt, that the Sabbath, as my text says, was made for man ; and that works of mercy and necessity may be performed on the Sabbath-day ; and that mercy is always to be preferred to ceremony : yet that there ought to be weighty reasons for such deviations from the ordinary rule ; and that in general we ought to rest from all our common and usual employments. In fact, there is, I think, no sin, except perhaps idolatry, more severely censured than Sabbath-breaking, throughout the Old Testament. So Ezekiel : “ I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them.” And again, “ My Sabbaths they greatly polluted ; then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness to consume them.”

The pollution of the Sabbath was one of the crying sins for which the Israelites were carried into captivity to Babylon ; and after their return from Babylon, what pains did their zealous rulers take

to reform them in this very particular!—Good Nehemiah, that most excellent servant of God, informs us, that the people entered into an express oath to walk in God's law; and with respect to the Sabbath, that if the people of the land were to bring ware, or any victuals, to sell on that day, they would not buy of them: "I contended," says he, "with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath-day?"

In our Saviour's time, the Jews are well known to have strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel. In our days, I see no reason for complaining of a tendency of this sort. With many persons, the defect appears to me to be of a very different kind; and as I have no opportunity of probing the consciences of those who fly from the presence of God in his holy temple, let me, in conclusion, be allowed to ask those who do frequent public worship, whether they take peculiar pains on this day to preserve in their minds reverent acknowledgments of God's goodness in their creation, preservation, and redemption? Whether God, as their Creator and Redeemer, has a place in their hearts throughout this day? Whether they come here for

the express purpose of doing good to their immortal part, or merely for curiosity or entertainment? Whether some are not soon wearied and fatigued in their attention; and whether they do not go on for years exactly in the same state, with the same indifference and lukewarmness, the same love of the world, and under the dominion of the same bad passions? Is it that they have arrived at so great a degree of perfection as to need no improvement; or did they never seriously lay these things to heart—never desire or expect any improvement from public worship and instruction? Brethren, if you really had prayed for God's grace in this house from Sabbath to Sabbath, in the name of his Son Jesus, grace would infallibly have been afforded. Take notice: in a life of only forty years, there are more than two thousand Sabbaths,—and you are bid to grow in grace. I am satisfied that if you had spent any considerable number of these *well*, you would necessarily have begun to grow, and would have continued to grow in grace. It is a great thing when the plant strikes root well, and sets off well from the first.

I freely allow there may, in many particular cases, be very good reasons why persons cannot

attend the *public* worship of God. Bodily infirmities, together with a great variety of circumstances that might be mentioned, may render it sometimes impossible, and often perfectly inexpedient, for a man to attempt the hazard of joining the public services of religion. But we are ever to take care that we do not substitute conveniences for necessities: we should ever be on our guard in this matter, ever be suspicious of our real inclinations. It must be granted, however, that in such things no man can judge for another, and it must therefore be left between God and his own conscience. Remember, there are other duties on the Sabbath besides attention to public worship,—many and important duties.

But perhaps you tell me you have been too much engaged in the affairs of the world: your duties to yourself, to your families, and many peculiar pressing circumstances, have taken up your attention from spiritual things,—circumstances that required attention, things that must have been done. It may have been so: but most probably many persons lay too great a stress on these things. Besides, the true answer is, *no circumstance, no business, no duty*, can have

interfered, that is one-thousandth part of the importance of the care of the soul. This is the “one thing needful;” it is the “pearl of great price.” Besides, God, who knows your situation far better than you do yourselves, has allowed you six days for your worldly business, and has expressly prohibited you from attending to it on the Sabbath day : and the Saviour has promised you, that if you do but take care to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all these things shall be added unto you.”

You have been once, or perhaps twice, at public worship on a Sunday. It is well : but then, in having so done, do you think you have satisfied the commandment of dedicating one-seventh of your time to Almighty God and the care of your salvation? What, when you have perhaps neglected entirely the duty of holding communion with God in private prayer, that he might by his grace enable you to make good use of his Sabbaths ! What, when you have neither besought him to open your eyes, warm your hearts, strengthen your memories, nor keep up your attention during divine service, and preserve you from worldly distraction ! Yet you have been at public worship twice ! Alas ! this

is not keeping the Sabbath-day holy : for though you may have done some things which you ought to have done, you have left other very material things undone which you ought also to have done ; and with such an inattention to the sacred business of the Sabbath, and such a lukewarm observance of its duties, no blessing is to be expected.— Brethren, I appeal to the consciences of those who unhappily spend their Sabbaths in this defective way, whether they themselves are in the habit of expecting the blessing of God on their heartless services ; whether, when such services are over on the Sunday evening, they are not more inclined to muse on what is to be done in the way of business, or pleasure and diversion, on the Monday following, than on the spiritual comforts and blessings they have experienced in discharging the duties of the Sunday.

Those who verily and indeed obey the Fourth Commandment, and remember to keep the Sabbath-day holy, have a very different tale to tell. Their closet witnesseth to them that they pour out their spirit to God—though not at all times, I allow, with equal fervour or earnestness, yet always with a sense of their necessities and unworthiness—

they pray for the blessing of God on their attention to the duties of his holy Sabbaths, and that they may comprehend the excellency of Jesus Christ and his redemption; that they may have their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and his love shed abroad in them, according to the promises of the Gospel.

Moreover, they are particularly distinguished by their attention to their family duties. It cannot be expected that those who have no great Sabbath-day concern for themselves, should be very solicitous about it for others. The discharge of duties to ourselves, and to our neighbours, our relatives, and our dependants, I believe usually keep pace with one another.

To conclude. Whenever you are inclined to feel cold and heartless about the Sabbath, or when you find your minds pressed with the crowding of worldly business or pleasures, it may have its uses to ask yourselves such questions as these:—Is this remembering the Sabbath day, and keeping it holy? Was it for this that God blessed the Sabbath, and sanctified it, from the beginning? Was not this day given to man before he fell, as a day of devout and grateful commemoration of his

Maker's kindness? And since his Fall and his becoming a miserable sinner, are not the reasons for employing the Sabbath in sacred things and to holy purposes, abundantly stronger—now that God has opened to us the gate of everlasting life through Jesus Christ? Again: Is not Christ risen from the dead; and do we not, as Christians, commemorate his resurrection every Sabbath, or every first day of the week; and does not the Saviour call on us to look to Him, and expect from his grace a resurrection to that rest, to that eternal rest, which the Scripture saith remains for the people of God?

Brethren, I am persuaded that every sensible, thinking person, when he has put all these things together, will not only be ashamed of the *little* he does, when he keeps the Fourth Commandment only in the way of mere form and without heart, but grieved on account of the *much* which he leaves undone.

In one word: the great use of the Sabbath is to purify the heart, and to lead it to the love of God, and to form a heavenly temper at peace with God through the atoning blood of Jesus, that we may lead a sanctified life here, and be thereby

prepared to sing the heavenly song of the blessed, Thou hast redeemed us by thy blood ! And you may be assured that every Sabbath is well spent which brings you nearer to your God and Redeemer in faith, love, gratitude, holy joy, and humility. These are the heavenly affections which enlarge the soul in a manner that passeth knowledge, and that wean it also from the world, and raise it to things above. Those who think differently of these things, either shut their eyes entirely, or open them so little as to excite no serious thought and reflection. In a very little time, all of us will think and judge, as those who have now their eyes open do think and judge ; that is, we shall have a lively conviction on our minds that the one thing needful, the care of the soul, is the business and proper concern of God's holy day. My prayer is, that you may remember this morning's warning respecting the Fourth Commandment ; and let all our most devout prayers be, with respect to this commandment, " Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law."

SERMON III.

COLOSS. iii. 17.

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

THIS is a very comprehensive and important precept, which, as it has no very particular connection in the place in which it stands, I shall proceed immediately to lay open and illustrate to the best of my power; and then endeavour to apply it in a practical manner to the consciences of different characters.

As the sacred writer allows of no exception, but requires that whatsoever we do in word or deed be all done in the name of the Lord Jesus, it is surely of great moment that we should clearly understand what is meant by doing or saying any

thing in the name of the Lord Jesus. This is the leading idea of the passage. What we do or say must not only be right in itself, but it must be done or said in the name of the Lord Jesus. If it be not so done or said, it is not done as the Christian ought to do it; and is so far from being acceptable to God, who gives the command, that it becomes unchristian, and has therefore the nature of sin.

I would wish, then, to engage the attention of my audience to this particular point. Let us endeavour to make out what is meant by doing any thing in the *name of the Lord Jesus*; because we see that not a single word or action of our lives can be right without this concomitant circumstance. Undoubtedly we are to take care that the matter of our words and actions be right and lawful: but this is not sufficient,—they ought to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus.

And it is no nice speculation which I am laying before you. It is an extensive practical principle that is here intended; which must influence all our actions without exception: not only those actions which are directly of a religious nature, but all our social duties; not only the

church and the closet, but the market, the shop, the counting-house, the family ; and, indeed, whatever we do or say, all must be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, in order that it may be acceptable to God.

Let no one, then, think me more precise, explicit, and tedious, than is necessary in opening this subject. Rather let it be our earnest prayer, that the same blessed Jesus, in whose name we are enjoined to do and say every thing, may teach us to good purpose what this precept means—not only in the letter, but in the spirit ; not in word only, but in power—that we may, in fact, make it our habitual practice to do every thing in his Name. He knows how corrupt, and blind, and self-sufficient, and crooked, and prejudiced our natures are, and how slow and dull of heart we are to understand and receive his commands and admonitions. Be it our prayer, then, that he may give us a right judgment in this great concern ; may both enlighten and persuade us. Brethren, be but once deeply convinced, that in obeying him you will find true happiness, and that in following the devices and desires of your own hearts you will find only vanity and misery—in one word, be

convinced that the wisdom and happiness of man consist in looking to the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, for every blessing both here and hereafter—and you will apply to him for help, and light, and instruction in every thing. You will learn to compare spiritual things with spiritual; and in yielding up yourselves to the light of his written word in the Gospel, you will not fail both to possess the truth in a right understanding, and to practise it in holy affections.

Let us briefly look over some passages in the Old and New Testament, in which language similar to that in my text is made use of. They will lead to a just and convincing interpretation of its meaning.

When David, in his well-known contest with the Philistine giant and champion, uses the following words on their meeting, “Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied;” you cannot be at a loss to comprehend what this holy man, this young hero, means that his adversary Goliath should understand. He charges him with referring his actions only

to his own honour, and depending upon his own powers: whereas he himself refers his conduct entirely to the honour of the Lord; and he depends on His arm alone. Soon after he says, "The battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands." — Now let the expression in the text, "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus," be explained by this parallel expression, and you will see it means, Do all your actions, of every kind, without any exception, with a special reference to the honour of the Lord Jesus, and with a distinct dependence on him only, for strength and wisdom to perform them as they ought to be performed. In brief, we are to honour Jesus Christ, and to depend on him in all we do. This honour and this dependence, I believe, comprehend the essence of what is meant by doing all things in the name of Jesus. And then, considering this as a precept addressed to all real Christians, and such as it is impossible for any but real Christians to practise, the paraphrase of the passage will be sufficiently simple and clear. For example, to this effect: "Ye who profess to have received Christ Jesus in all his offices, and to be living by faith on him, in humble dependence on him for pardon, peace of

conscience, and ability to lead a new life in righteousness, sobriety, and godliness; take especial care that you never lose sight of Him on whom ye have believed: Never live without him as present and abiding in your hearts: Undertake nothing, execute nothing, without him in your minds;—that is, consider and intend his honour and glory in all your words and deeds. Aim at this perfection; and however short you may fall of it, continue to aim at it in every thing, and on all occasions. View yourselves not as principals, but as subordinate agents, though at the same time free and rational agents, depending on him alone, and in no respect on yourselves, for strength and for light to quicken and to guide you in all your words and deeds.”

What a secure, real, and strong connection with the Lord Jesus is here implied! All the doctrines of the Gospel are here at once implied in this direction thus understood. The man who undertakes to practise the precept thus understood, must have been beaten off from all pharisaical dependencies on his own wisdom, righteousness, and strength: he must have found access to Jesus by faith, for the great purposes of justification and salvation through him as

a Redeemer indeed ; and, as the Apostle describes it, Christ must dwell in him by his Spirit. Such a believer and follower of Christ considers himself as redeemed by the atoning blood of Jesus, that he should no longer live to himself, but to Him that saved him. He is no longer his own ; he lives to Him who died for him and rose again, and who, he doubts not, will raise up all his faithful servants also at the last day. This vital union between a faithful disciple of Christ and his Master is represented as a mystery by St. Paul ; and indeed it implies a connection abundantly more close and interesting, though invisible, than any that can subsist with the dearest friend in this world. This affection is both more pure and strong in its kind, and also more active and durable in its effects : words fail me in attempting to describe it : and I think it is very clear that the Holy Scriptures intimate that more is intended than can be expressed or communicated by any words in our present state. Conscious of internal poverty, emptiness, and unworthiness, the real Christian obtains all his happiness by a reliance on his Saviour from moment

to moment; and endeavours in all he does and says to direct his ways to his honour, and to exercise this dependence daily more and more; and thus it is that the life he lives in the flesh, he lives by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him and gave himself for him.

Such, I think, are the ideas conveyed by the words “doing all things in the name of the Lord Jesus.” It is only carrying into *every* word and deed that which David did in one particular instance. He came to Goliath in the name of the Lord of hosts; that is, he came forth honouring the Lord, and depending upon him only: this was the motive and the spring of the soul of David in his combat with Goliath. He sought not his own honour—he trusted not in his own valour. Keep close to this idea, all faithful Christians: never seek your own honour, never trust your own strength, when you fight against sin, the world, and the devil: look on this warfare as the great concern of your Lord and Master: observe the orders and directions of the Captain of your salvation—these are what ye have to execute: ye are to trust in his grace alone; and in gaining victory the triumph

will be his : the profit will be yours eternally, but beware of encroaching one tittle upon his honour and glory.

Thus the material part of the text is explained : however, for further confirming this interpretation, I will mention another passage or two from Scripture.

The attentive reader who notices those passages in which the Name of the Lord is mentioned (and they are innumerable), will see that the whole stream of the sacred pages runs in the same way. So, in the fourteenth chapter of the second book of Chronicles, good king Asa in great distress prays thus ; “ Help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on thee, and in thy Name we go against this multitude.” His views and spirit, you observe, are perfectly agreeable to what has been said.

Again, when Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal, he said, “ Call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the Name of the Lord ; and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God.” This excellent prophet of the Lord certainly intended to honour his God supremely, and he accordingly exercised the most bold and resolute dependence upon him.

“The Name of the Lord,” says Solomon, “is a strong tower ; the righteous flee unto it and are safe.” But what is it that the righteous flee unto ? They honour and they trust in the Lord, sheltering themselves under his power, and goodness, and wisdom, and all his glorious perfections. So that the Name of the Lord includes the whole of the Divine Character : and when we “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,” we make use of *his whole* character, and all his offices, whatever he is, as God-man, as Mediator, Shepherd, Husband of the Church, King, Priest, or Prophet. There is in Zechariah x. 12, a remarkably precious promise ; “I will strengthen them in the Lord ; and they shall walk up and down in his Name, saith the Lord.” This is exactly the thing which the text declares ; “Doing all in the Name of the Lord Jesus :” and when men are effectually strengthened by a lively faith in him, through the promises of the written word, they are enabled, in all their walk, to live on him by faith to his glory. For, to come now to the New Testament, whatever is said in the Old Testament of walking in the name of *the Lord*, is in the New said of the name of the *Lord Jesus* ; and the reason is, because he is

the Lord Jehovah in the proper sense of the word. Thus we are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost : which implies, that we give ourselves up to trust in, and be ruled by, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost absolutely ; taking each of the Three Persons equally : though not dividing the substance of the Godhead, nevertheless considering each of the Persons as equally the true God ; “ neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance,” as it is very judiciously expressed in the Athanasian Creed.

If, then, in the Old Testament, men are bidden to call upon the Lord’s Name, and tell the people what things he hath done ; and Moses and Aaron are said to be among his priests, and Samuel among such as called upon his Name,—in the New Testament, Christians are said continually to call upon the Name of the Lord Jesus : and thus, whatever honour and dependence is in the Old Testament ascribed to Jehovah, is certainly in the New Testament ascribed to Jesus Christ. It would be easy to demonstrate this by such a multitude of proofs as would be unsuitable to a popular audience. And therefore, if Christ were not indeed the true and very God, it should seem

quite inconceivable how such honour should constantly be given to him in the New Testament as belongs to the Lord alone. "In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" says Peter to the lame man at the gate of the Temple. Again: "His Name, through faith in his Name, hath made this man strong." Lastly, St. Paul, 1 Cor. vi.: "Ye are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus." In this instance the honour of Christ, and the nature of dependence on him, are marked as with a sun-beam.

The conclusion, brethren, is, Christ is all in all; He is the living and true God; and whatever you do in word or deed will then be right, when it is done to his honour and glory, and in full and complete dependence on his will, his authority, and his power. Let no man fear that in honouring the Son he might possibly dishonour, or in some way neglect, God the Father; because it is said, "Whatsoever things the Father doeth, the Son doeth likewise." The Son and the Father are one; and in honouring the Son, you honour the Father and the Holy Ghost likewise: and being once led by the Spirit of God into the depth and spirit of Christianity, you will so see the use of

all the sacred three Persons of the Holy Trinity, that you will be enabled to bring your regard to them in a useful practical manner into all your thoughts, and words, and actions.

Then, it is impossible for me to describe the blessedness of that heavenly life which brings every part of our conduct, as it were, into one view, compact and condensed, according delightfully with what we so often repeat (perhaps without much thought in many instances)—viz. “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.”

The last member of the text is, “*giving thanks to God and the Father by HIM.*” It is here distinctly implied that men must come to God by Jesus Christ as the way; they must renounce all pretensions to righteousness and merits of their own, and depend solely for acceptance on the *Beloved only*. Our souls being truly conscious of unworthiness altogether, learn to express a cordial thankfulness to God, as his Father, and our Father, through Jesus; and not only in solemn worship, but in all and every part of our conduct, the expression of thankfulness to God our Father becomes habitual to us: and this is the worship

of heaven itself, where glory is continually ascribed to God and the Lamb. Happy they who have the beginnings of this disposition here on earth, and who thereby become prepared for heavenly employments!

This is the precept of doing every thing, in word or deed, in the name of the Lord Jesus; and when thus explained, it cannot fail, one would think, to excite very serious considerations in the minds of all men who pretend to believe in the Scriptures as the revealed will of God.

Our reflections, indeed, on this occasion, will be very different, accordingly as we are differently disposed. But remember, that, after all, it will be eternally true, that there are but two sorts of persons, however numerous may be the classes into which we are accustomed to divide them: we CAN only find him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not. It is remarkable how the word of God keeps up this distinction, and this only, in all its addresses; and how it always uses a language peculiarly adapted to each sort. And in the last act of the awful scene of the last day, the same distinction will be supported with, on the one hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father;"

and, on the other, “ Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.”

I would not easily persuade myself that the congregation before me have not learnt to know what are the general marks of the character to which Scripture ascribes the name of a true believer, or faithful servant of God, as also how it describes and addresses him that serveth him not: and as it would lead me too far from my present subject to enter into a full description of these two sorts of persons, I will content myself at present with one very important observation—viz. that those who would make more than two essential sorts of character before God, have not yet rightly apprehended their Bibles. There are eminent Christians, and Christians of a lower description, no doubt: so are there notorious and openly wicked professors of Christianity, and decent pharisaical pretenders to the same; and ministers of the Gospel, in their addresses to the people, may with great advantage avail themselves of these secondary distinctions in many cases: but still you can make no more than two perfectly distinct classes of human beings before God,—the one following the devices and

desires of their own hearts, in great ignorance of the Gospel; and the other led by the Spirit of God, and walking before him in newness of life: in other words, the few, that are treading the narrow road that leads to life, and striving to enter in at the strait gate; and the many, the thoughtless giddy multitude, that crowd the broad way that leads to destruction.

The grand end and purport of all our preaching is to lessen this unhappy multitude on the broad road: that is, with the Apostle, we, knowing well the terrors of the Lord, would persuade men, and entreat them to join the *few* happy ones who are serving God in holiness, sobriety, and godliness of life.

For this purpose, it is absolutely necessary that we must shake to their very centre and foundation such principles and affections as consist in love of ease, love of the world, and the pride of life. We must bid you place no reliance whatever on a few ceremonious observances of religion, however right they may be in themselves: nay, you must cease to lay any great stress on your mere orthodoxy of sentiment, or your mere external morality, so long as these things produce no change of heart,

no genuine love to the Saviour, no thorough abandonment of vicious and unholy passions and sensual indulgences. To such characters I must say ; “ Alas ! my text (‘ Whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him, ’) does not belong to your case, in any other way than to shew you that in your present condition you can have no pretensions to such a practice. Your practice is in contrast to that which is implied in this truly Christian injunction ; it is in full force against it : and the best application that I can make of it in such circumstances, is, to make use of it for the purpose of fixing conviction on your minds, that you cannot be considered as obedient disciples of Christ, who study his commands, and regulate your conduct by them.”

It is *then* that the Christian religion is what it should be, when it produces the effects of this text ; and never forget the great rule, that “ Ye shall know them by their fruits.” Now, we cannot put a lower interpretation on the text, than, that the great Captain of our salvation should be honoured supremely by us ; that we should love him affectionately ; and do all that we do from an

honourable regard to his character, and the highest esteem for his person, and a grateful sense of our vast obligations to him. Then this regard, and affection, and grateful sense, must not be cold and lifeless, but be really felt in the soul, and produce discernible effects, and evidently influence us in all our actions and conduct towards God and man.

But, my friends, the history of religion has in this respect a sad tale to tell. Mankind, being corrupt by nature, are soon weary of the love of their Redeemer; and hence, in various ways, they have gradually undermined and adulterated the Gospel of their salvation. And though true religion, and belief in the Gospel, are the most rational things in the world, men have, in a multitude of cases, substituted, instead of Revelation, what they have called plain common sense; and the miserable fragments of our depraved faculty of reason, in the room of the influences of God's Holy Spirit; and a bare speculative faith, which receives a certain set of *opinions only*, in the place of a lively faith, which puts its whole trust in the Saviour Jesus Christ. Hence it has happened, that, in spite of St. Paul's most decisive declara-

tion, that a man may give all he has to the poor, and his body to be burned, and have no charity ; yet a little humanity, and a little almsgiving, has acquired the name of charity ; and a few decent morals have been supposed to answer the purpose of the love of Christ ; and, lastly, the profession of any thing like warm, grateful, and affectionate love, to the most lovely and most deserving Object of our unbounded love—viz. the Son of God—has been often looked on as a mark of cant or hypocrisy, or, at best, as unnecessary, and always to be viewed with jealousy and suspicion.

In this way of proceeding, the affections have been often, as it were, entirely excluded from religion ; and instead of regulating and reducing the affections into good order, instead of bridling them in their excesses and stimulating them in their defects, it has been too much the fashion to decry all feeling in religion as enthusiasm, and all seriousness as melancholy ; and men have reserved their serious thoughts, as well as their ardent affections, for the world and worldly objects, instead of obeying the Scripture rule, of placing our affections on things above. Hence, after the blessed Reformation, which had furnished

a glorious harvest of pure evangelical fruits throughout these dominions, as well as through various parts of Germany, party contention between Whigs and Tories arose to a height which they could never have attained provided the life and vigour of the true Protestant Reformed Religion had not been suffered to decay ; nor would many of the leading clergy have taken such strong parts in those political disputes, dividing themselves into distinct bodies in opposition to each other, if the religion of the heart had been duly cultivated, and, above all, if in their practice they had ever kept in mind the text of this discourse, and had stopped from time to time to reflect whether they were really, in the contentions now alluded to, doing every thing in the name of Jesus Christ, and giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Brethren, I mention these things briefly, and for no other reason than as a beacon to warn men of the danger of neglecting so momentous a principle as that which is contained in my text.

Is it harsh or uncandid in me to suppose that several may now hear me who never once judged it incumbent upon them to put in practice the

rule of my text—"Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of Jesus Christ, with thanks?" Are not several now present, who in their consciences will and must plead guilty to the charge? Remember! a particular, distinct, special regard to Christ—not a cold, but a warm and hearty regard to him—should be felt and exercised in your whole conduct. Even the best of Christians are labouring to possess more and more of this, while at the same time they know and lament how little they have of it. It is on this account that they cherish and esteem very highly all those Christian doctrines which feed and maintain this regard in their hearts; for example, the fall of man, and our natural corruption.—Brethren, those who feel these doctrines aright, in their consequences on their own tempers and dispositions, will need no arguments to persuade them to seek to the great Mediator for a lively and productive faith in his redemption, to give them peace of conscience and a sense of justification before God. Again: those to whom sin is a burden; those who say from the heart at church, "the burden of it is intolerable;" will not much need to be exhorted to

apply for the preventing Grace and the Spirit of Christ to help in time of need. And once more : those who feel how soon they may lose again the spirit of humility, meekness, resignation, and, still more, the spirit of adoption and union with Christ, will not be disposed to undervalue the precious gifts of the Spirit, or to trifle with them and hazard their loss ; but rather to aim at a closer communion with Jesus, that he may not only *prevent* them, in giving them a will in the first instance, but (as our Article expresses it) “ also work with us-when we have that will.”

Then, with a deep conviction of these inevitable necessities, arising from the sad state in which we are by nature as children of wrath ; and with the happy experience of finding daily deliverance from the captivity of sin, and of making a blessed progress in the Christian course ; is it probable, or can it possibly be, that *such* followers of Christ, such truly practical disciples of their Master, should not be led, in all that they do, to be grateful to him, to honour and regard him as their all in all ? How can it happen, that He, of whom they constantly stand in need in their religious conflicts and struggles, should ever be out of their memory ?

They cannot, they never do, undertake to mortify any one bad inclination, to get thoroughly rid of any one disorderly or hurtful practice, or to manage and discharge any worldly business, but in the name and through the help of the same Saviour.

There is no one point of religion more big with deep and fruitful instruction than this.—Mark me ! You are very sincere (I will suppose), and would not *willingly* grieve the Saviour or his Holy Spirit ; but there is some portion of your conduct which does not please you, and which you know does not please him, and yet you find a great difficulty in correcting it. It is your besetting sin, or one of your besetting sins ; and you have had no success hitherto in striving to get rid of it. I say, then, bring your endeavours to the Cross of Christ. Pray to Jesus himself for deliverance. Let all your endeavours for deliverance be made in His name ; let them be begun, continued, and ended in his name. If you have struggled in earnest, and been faithful to your convictions, I strongly suspect you have forgotten this rule, or but very weakly applied it. Remember, then (when you try again), to make

your attempt in His Name : and not merely in the use of the word Jesus, but in *faith*, nothing wavering. Apply to him, in his own way, and according to his own rich and faithful promises. Look upon it as part of his salvation, that he has engaged to protect you from the mischiefs of the world, the flesh, and the devil. In this way you will not only, in God's good time, obtain deliverance from the pressure of the immediate temptation ; but you will, by such exertions of practical faith and holy obedience, improve your connection with your Redeemer, make him a closer friend in distresses and difficulties, and, in general, you will be enabled to hold a livelier and more abiding communion with him. And this, I am warranted on Scripture grounds to assure you, is the true way to learn a more complete resignation to the will of God in all sorts of afflictions, to acquire a hand more liberal and more open to the needy, and to fight a better fight in every part of the Christian's warfare. The reason is simple, and in close connection with my subject ;—you will be led, in following this advice, to be more and more exact in doing both these things now men-

tioned, and all other things that arise, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and with thanks to God and the Father by him.

It is very true, my beloved brethren, that, after all the advice that can be given, difficulties will arise in the Christian life not easy to resolve; yet I think that there is not a difficulty that can be devised, where the rule before us will not prove a safe and salutary guide. When men are once in the habit of having the Saviour in all their thoughts; when their practical idea of him is always that of having him for their Prophet, Priest, and King; when they look to him in distress, derive pleasure and refreshment from him to their minds, and solid advantages from his influence in the mortification of sin of every sort; they may (like St. Paul), be sometimes perplexed, but they will never be in despair. Their desire is to manifest the life of Jesus in their mortal bodies: they do nothing in their own spirit, for the sake of praise and reputation among men: and their object ever is, to make out whether such or such a step, which they are about to take, or such a frequent practice, can fairly be said to be done in the name of their Lord and Master.

And here I particularly observe, that a conscientious Christian is very suspicious of the determinations of his own deceitful heart. Is such a practice of spending time, using money, mixing in worldly companies, going a certain length in the amusements and vanities of life, consistent with doing every thing in the name of Christ? Satan will suggest to you, that your having even so much as paused to consider the subject, is a good argument for your compliance: you have not done the thing rashly; you are conscious of having some regard for the name of Christ; and you would not have entered upon such a course of conduct at all, had you not considered it, and been convinced of its safety and innocence. Oh! beloved brethren, this is a dangerous ground to tread; it will crumble under you. A sensible Heathen could say, “Abstain from doing that concerning the lawfulness of which you have doubts.”

Review this matter, therefore, very carefully again, and again—Satan is a treacherous adviser. Consider well how your great Friend and Intercessor himself will view your conduct in the instance where you have doubts. Will He, who

sees the bottom of your hearts, and who cannot be mistaken, now think that you are acting in his name in this matter? Or will he at the last day, when the great inquiry will be made into the motives of men, acquit you of neglecting his honour and glory, of want of love and respect to him, and of ingratitude of heart towards himself, who became poor and despised, that we might become rich and abounding in heavenly blessings?

The great point aimed at in this discourse, is to impress a most important practical doctrine—namely, that over and besides that general and sincere exercise of faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, whereby his true disciples commit themselves to him for eternity, they should most diligently study to cultivate a spirit of habitual dependence on the same Jesus in all their walk; so that, agreeably to the text, whatsoever they do in word or deed, they may do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, with thanksgiving. For example: Have you been injured? Then, as Christ forgave his enemies, and prayed for them, and as ye hope to be forgiven, so do ye. Are you in poverty or affliction? Look to Him, who was despised, and had not where to lay his

head, and has nevertheless purchased for you real and substantial treasures. Do your steps sometimes halt in your pilgrimage? Be more and more earnest in your application to Him, who gives his Spirit, and by whose union ye become abundantly supplied with every want. Do ye often doubt, and are often discouraged with temptations, difficulties, and perplexities? Apply closely to Him, who was himself tempted, and is the succourer of the tempted. Has your patience been much tried with a variety of evils? Remember what contradiction He endured, and faint not. Are you called on to be liberal to the needy? Let His love constrain you.

Brethren, I cannot conceive a single case of duty in which you may not derive strength and comfort from the Name of Jesus. Do ye fear lest ye should be overpowered by your spiritual enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh? Only trust not in bruised reeds. Go in the name of the Lord, as David did against Goliath, and opposition will flee before you. Men may take much fruitless pains (while they depend on pharisaical, self-righteous views and motives) in their endeavours to overcome their besetting

sins : Let your constant prayer be, that you may be guided by the Spirit of Christ into the true practical meaning of the text ; and then, when you do whatsoever you do in the name of Jesus Christ, you will infallibly prosper.

But I leave it with you, as one of the greatest and most important practical considerations of the Christian, that you *never can prosper*, you never *will* prosper, so long as you *attempt to mix* the ways of the world with the ways of true followers of Christ. Be patient with me ; for while I live, and can lift up my voice in pleading the Redeemer's cause, ye shall hear this truth from me again and again. The World, the World, is, and always was, the bane of Religion. The two systems do not admit of a compromise ; and those who attempt it, grieve the Spirit of God, cramp their spiritual enjoyments, defile the purity of them, injure their own usefulness, and, what is worst of all, they do so at the peril of losing their precious and immortal souls.

SERMON IV.

HEB. xii. 14.

.....*Holiness, without which no man shall see
the Lord.*

ON the consideration of these words there arise two important questions: first, What is the scriptural meaning of the term holiness? and, secondly, What are the methods by which holiness is to be attained? Without it, no man, it is declared, shall see the Lord: it cannot *be*, therefore, but every wise man *must* be looking after it with all diligence. Yet it is equally plain that the first step of the wise man must be to inquire in what holiness consists.

I should entertain little hope of managing this subject profitably by laying down cold and formal definitions. In practical matters, *that* method does not succeed: nor do the holy Scriptures

furnish us with any such examples. Nevertheless, the Scriptures fail not, on *any occasion*, to communicate the instruction they would impress in such a way as not to be mistaken. So in the case before us : From the Sacred Oracles we collect that true holiness consists essentially in a conformity of *our nature* to the nature and will of God. Not that we find, throughout all the sacred pages, such a precise description of holiness as this ; but we collect the thing to be so, from numerous passages where the word *holy* is used ; and not seldom by contrast, where characters or practices opposite to what God enjoins or approves are described by the term unholy. In proving this by quotations, one might produce a large portion of the Bible.

Our great ancestor Adam was created not only with innocent, but with holy dispositions. Solomon says, “ I have found that God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.” In the fall of Adam, his posterity became depraved and corrupt : “ The good man (says the Prophet Micah) is perished out of the earth, and there is none upright among men.” It has, however, pleased Almighty God, in his

goodness and mercy, to restore penitent sinners, from their state of depravity and corruption and condemnation, to a state of holiness and favour, through the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. And these considerations of the fall of man, and his restoration by the Gospel, are absolutely necessary for a Christian to form a right judgment of the nature of that holiness to which he is called by his profession, and without which he is not to see the Lord. For though it be very true that holiness, in *its principle* and foundation, is eternally the same thing, without the smallest variation in kind or degree, yet the practical marks by which holiness is to be known and distinguished from counterfeits, are very different, as viewed in Adam, an innocent upright being before his fall, and in his depraved posterity. As Adam, before his disobedience and fall, could know nothing of repentance, much less of faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ; so he must have been totally ignorant of the manner in which God, by the redemption that is in Jesus, has displayed his attributes of justice and mercy, of infinite hatred against sin, and of boundless compassion towards man. Adam, in his state of innocence, loved God for his

amiable perfections, and, no doubt, was grateful to him for the profusion of benefits with which he was surrounded in Paradise; but he could know nothing of God's love to us in Christ. God had not then commended his love to us, in that while we were sinners Christ died for us. Yet God is ever the same, *yesterday, to-day, and to eternity*. God is ever the same holy Being, whether he condemns, or whether he pardons, or whether he leaves men in a state of probation. We are therefore to keep in mind, that it is not the holiness of God we are inquiring after, but the holiness of man, and of fallen man. The holiness of man, as we have said, always consists in the conformity of his nature and will to the will of God; but it is the business of fallen man to examine, whether his will be in strict conformity to the will of God, as displayed in those glorious dispensations in which man himself, as a fallen creature, is more immediately and more peculiarly concerned. It is not enough for a fallen creature, alienated from God by wicked works, to content himself with talking largely, and perhaps with an almost unmeaning admiration, of the wonderful perfections of God, unless he has thoroughly

weighed his own case ; unless he has considered the dealings of God with himself ; unless he cordially owns the justice of God's sentence of condemnation, thankfully receives the mediation of Christ, hungers and thirsts after a knowledge of God's righteousness, and sees a beauty in the whole process of man's restoration to his favour. This, then, is holiness : for this is to see the beauty of the Divine character, the excellency of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

These things may serve to shew how greatly defective are their notions of holiness, who place the substance of it in mere moral virtues during the intercourse with our fellow-creatures. Prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude, are virtues indispensably necessary, essential ingredients in the Christian character ; and no man can have the least pretensions to holiness who does not abound in these things. But, then, the converse is not true : a man may be what is called a discreet, prudent man, from mere worldly motives ; so may he be very just and faithful in all his dealings, and temperate in all his habits, from motives purely selfish : he may also be a cou-

rageous and brave man, from pride, vain-glory, and a desire of aggrandisement. “ We doubt not,” says the Article of our own Church, “ but where the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are wanting, all these things have the nature of sin,”—that is, there can be nothing like holiness where there are not higher principles in the heart than those just mentioned.

I miss my aim if I do not make myself well understood on this head.—The subject is important, has some difficulty about it, and is often mistaken. Men are apt to think they are sufficiently holy, if they perform, in a tolerable way, the duties of the second table of God’s Commandments:—they are kind to their parents, they abstain from gross vices, and they are content with their own property and covet nothing of their neighbours’. Then they suppose themselves *eminently* holy, if they pay some regard to the first table of Commandments:—they go to church; they don’t swear; and they say their prayers to the only and true God. All this is well, as far as it goes; but I earnestly crave your attention while I open the miserable defects of this system.

It is impossible to perform any one Christian

duty right, whether it respects the first or the second table of Commandments, unless there be a basis of Christian principles. There must be holy principles before there can be holy actions. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and all thy strength." Now a man may not only say this, but also think he loves God with all his heart, when he has not in his heart one grain of holy spiritual love. The man thrives in the world; he has good health; his family about him are happy; every thing he does succeeds: and he would wish to stay here for ever. "How grateful," says he, "ought I to be to the benevolent Being who has constituted this excellent order of things!" But tell this happy man to read his Bible; and that there he is bidden to set his affections on *things above*; and that, if he loves the world, "the love of the Father is not in him;"—that by nature "he is a child of wrath;"—that by nature he is under a state of "condemnation," and that nothing can free him from the execution of the sentence but an interest in the Redeemer's merits. Tell him that his love to God must not be an abstract speculative love of a great and powerful Being, but a spiritual principle, that

pervades every one of his thoughts and actions from a sense of what God has done for him.—Any other god than the God of Israel, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is an imaginary god ; and any other love than that of one who is redeemed with a price, is imaginary love. In a word, study the Scriptures by day ; study the Scriptures by night ; never rest till you are satisfied in what relation you actually stand to God—and then you will know what love is due to him, and whether you in any degree come up to that standard. This is the way, the only way, to understand the nature of holy views, and holy affections.

My brethren, how perfectly plain this matter is to any one who duly weighs it !

Is it not a faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners ? Ought we not, then, to inquire whether we are sensible of the greatness of those sins which made it necessary that such precious blood should be shed ? Ought we to be satisfied with a superficial, careless view of them ? Ought we to be easy about them, provided we can but persuade ourselves that they are remitted to us, and that we shall be pardoned in the world to come ? These are not holy thoughts—

we must have more holiness than this, if we ever see the Lord.

Permit me to impress deeply on your minds, that no men are so holy as those who, with a godly repentance, grieve for sin and a sinful nature: and yet this spiritual sorrow for sin is consistent and contemporary with a holy joy in believing the redemption by Christ, and an application of his sacrifice to a burdened conscience. Nay, it not only is consistent with this joy, but no true joy of this kind can exist except in connection with a godly sorrow working repentance. And thus we bring this part of our inquiry to a single point: The holiness of man, as it respects God—that is, the holiness of fallen man, as it respects his reconciled Father in Christ—consists in a true and entire approbation of God's way of salvation by Christ; in a thorough abhorrence and hatred of sin; and in an ardent desire to become a new creature, and to exemplify in thoughts, words, and actions all the graces of the Spirit. Such is this branch of holiness, which has for its object a reconciled God accepting his dutiful servants through his beloved Son. Reflect therefore, brethren, how very different is this notion of holi-

ness from the ordinary notion which worldly characters entertain of what they commonly denominate good men and good Christians.

Then that branch of holiness which regards our duties to our neighbour, differs also quite as much from the ordinary sentiments of the multitude on this subject. Our Saviour gave a new commandment to his disciples, and told them that their love to one another should be a sure mark to all men that they belonged to him. This love to the household of faith never fails to shew itself in every possible act of kindness and charity. There is, indeed, a duty which we all owe to one another merely as brethren and fellow-creatures ; but the principle I have in view has its origin in the workmanship of the Spirit, by which the new man in Christ Jesus is created unto holiness ; and it is for that reason a holy principle. The new man is said in Scripture to be created in the image of Christ, and the true Christian loves the image of his Saviour wherever he has good reason to believe it exists. Here is a sacred bond of union in all respects different from mere natural affection, or mere worldly friendship. All worldly persons

may have a love for one another, but true Christians have a peculiar and holy esteem for their brethren in Christ: they pray for wicked men, but their communion is with saints, and they are waiting to enjoy this communion for ever in a future state.

I have now laid before you the scriptural ideas of that important qualification called "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:" and I would hope that several in this congregation may be at this moment anxious to hear what I have to say concerning the method of obtaining it. And this was the second point which I proposed to consider.

Now if I have already so far succeeded as to make it tolerably plain in what holiness consists, every word which I have to add on the second head, viz. the method of obtaining holiness, will throw further light on what has gone before.

Persons of a pharisaical cast, who are proud of their attainments, thinking well of themselves because free from gross vices and decorous in their outward deportment, are in no state of preparation for the acquisition of true holiness. The

reason is, they think themselves holy already. They have much to unlearn : they know nothing of the extensiveness of the holy law of God.

Again ; careless sinners, who day after day are drinking in iniquity like water, must be alarmed with the terrors of death and judgment before they will listen to any instruction concerning the way of obtaining holy dispositions.

But, “ Is it not enough to tell men to reflect on their condition, to read the Scriptures carefully, and to do their duty in the station to which God has called them ? ” Brethren, I would to God that all men acted agreeably even to such a description. This world would soon assume a wonderfully different appearance. But this inquiry compels me to be still much more clear and much more explicit.

Therefore, in this case I say, Read the holy Scriptures with care and diligence, and constantly ; ye cannot read them too often or too carefully : reflect on your own condition as fallen creatures ; ye cannot do this too seriously. Again ; do your duty, in the station to which God has called you, to the best of your power and knowledge. In the course of doing these things with humility,

you may expect the blessing of Almighty God on the instructions you receive respecting the narrow path of holiness. Yet, if ye are able to explain your views no further than in some such general way as this, there still appears to be a grand defect in your practical Christianity. And that I may detain you no longer with preparatory reflections, let me proceed to say, that I apprehend ye have not made that use of the Saviour, Jesus Christ, nor of his grace and of his Spirit, which the Gospel teaches you to do. “Without me,” says he himself, “ye can do nothing.” This passage, and a thousand others, shew that it must be by a direct application in prayer to Christ, our Intercessor, that we may expect to obtain holy dispositions. The Scriptures themselves are a sealed book to those who do not pray for spiritual light and spiritual understanding: a natural man never understands, nor can understand them, without prayer for the guidance of the Spirit of God. St. Paul, in his Epistle to Titus, says, that Jesus Christ came not only “to redeem us,” but also “to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Now, whoever is zealous of good works, is a holy man; and therefore we are

hereby taught that the way to obtain holiness must be through the help of the Redeemer purifying to himself a peculiar people—in other words, a holy people; a people not, like worldly characters, living in bondage to sin and Satan, but abounding in the fruits of sanctification, and looking forward with delight to the blessed communion of saints in the heavenly world.

These observations tend to open the second branch of the subject we are considering, and to lead by degrees a thinking student of the Gospel to a right judgment of the way in which holiness of character is to be obtained. He must go to Christ for this splendid endowment: merely in his own strength he will never make any progress. Yet he must by no means stand still, and indolently expect miracles to be wrought for his deliverance. *Going* to Christ, is not standing still; neither does it imply an easy effort. Christ's yoke, indeed, is easy, and his burden light; but to establish the saving connection between Christ and the sinner, is often no easy task. Often men are very unwilling to be healed of their maladies; often Christ stands at the door of men's hearts and knocks in vain. Does any man tell me that he is sure of

his salvation, without using any exertion of his own whatever? I silence him instantly by quoting the remarkable text, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Or again; am I told that the mere use of our own faculties, after what God has done for us, is now quite sufficient? I then quote the very next verse of the same chapter: "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." That Holy Spirit which directed the pen of the inspired writer, St. Paul, well knowing how prone men are to run into extremes, hath so ordered this Epistle that these two verses are close together. A man who rests on one only, must wilfully forget the other.

To proceed; though the Articles of our religion have undergone no alteration for many years past, yet the doctrine of Justification by Faith is at present much better understood than it was about fifty or sixty years ago. The distinction between a mere dead faith, and a true and lively faith which is productive, working by love, is also much better understood than formerly; and the same may be said, in some measure, concerning the nature of works. Such, among many mischiefs and inconve-

niences, have been the *good effects* of controversy. The great point, the difficult and important point, which in my judgment still requires peculiar attention and peculiar *enforcing* in our days, respects the method by which good works are to be done. All reasonable men, without exception, are agreed that there must *be* good works : the only question is, How are they to be done ? in what manner are they to be produced ? How is a man, habituated to evil, to learn practically to do good ? And you will observe, that this very point, all-important as it is, is the immediate subject of this second part of my discourse. To ask, How are we to attain holiness, or holy dispositions ? is the very same thing, in fact, as to ask, How are good works to be produced ? Good works, good deeds, and holy acts, holy deeds, are (in all religious discourses) terms of the very same import.

Now here I should certainly act a very insincere and disingenuous part, if I did not confess that I believed great mistakes, and mistakes of the utmost consequence, are often made in our conceptions of this subject. And yet I think it is very true that all the Articles of our Church, and almost every sentence in the Liturgy which

we constantly use, tend to exhibit, to explain, and to enforce right ideas, and prevent erroneous conceptions or conclusions. Let me suppose, then, that we have before us a sinner deeply concerned for the salvation of his immortal soul. The man believes that without holiness he shall never see the Lord; and we will further suppose him to have acquired some clear ideas respecting the nature of holiness. "But how am I to attain this holy character? (says our candidate for eternity.) Trifle not with me: I *may* have great possessions, but what can I give in exchange for my soul? or what will it profit me if I should gain the whole world and lose my own soul? Teach me, O teach me the way to holiness!" All the wisdom of antiquity could never answer such an inquiry as this. The malady of fallen man pervades his whole constitution: "There is," as we so frequently say on our knees, "no health in us." Happily, the disease is not incurable. St. Paul says, "The law of God is a schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ;" and if you are not conscious of your corruptions, if you are not truly sensible that in yourself dwelleth no good thing, the law has not yet done its work as a schoolmaster: you have not yet fled

to Christ to *restore* in your souls the lost image of God, to correct and subdue all your evil propensities, and create in you a new heart and a right judgment ; or, in other words, to produce in you those very holy dispositions, the attainment of which is the subject of our present inquiry.

You tell me, perhaps, that ever since you have taken the alarm lest you should die before you had made your peace with God, you have been diligently endeavouring, according to the Confession in our Liturgy, to lead a godly, righteous, and sober life, in order that you may have a better life to reflect on, have more ease of conscience, and more confidence towards God.

Such declarations as these, my beloved brethren, must be cross-examined, and probed to the bottom. I grant, there *may* be in them a very laudable concern for the salvation of the soul ; but still they savour much of great unsoundness and great misconception ; and I suspect them to originate in a very erroneous view of the mode of attaining holiness.

Remember, then, we have an uneasy sinner before us, looking with dread on death and judgment, and searching on all sides for relief from a

troubled conscience, and for hope and comfort from doing some good actions. Alas ! I fear then it is not on the merits of Christ that such a character rests his chief hope, but on the merits of his own righteous actions, which are to introduce him to the Saviour's notice and compassion. Our Liturgy, in the Confession, says, Restore the penitent, — in order that, when restored, he may lead a righteous, sober, godly life. You are inverting this just, this wise, and necessary order : you are aiming in your own strength, either entirely or principally, to become sober, righteous, and godly,—that you may then have some pretensions to entreat Christ to restore you ; whereas the whole current of the Old and New Testament, the language of the Church, the nature of holiness, require a contrary order to be observed. Make the tree good (says our Lord) and the fruit will be good ; the “ corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit : ” in other words, there can be no holiness without a *principle* of holiness. So says our Article, already quoted : “ Works done before the grace of God and the inspiration of his Spirit,” the very best works, “ have the nature of sin.” Just so our Homily : “ The right Christian faith

is, not only to believe all the Christian articles to be true, but to have a sure trust and confidence in God's merciful promises to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ ;" whereof doth follow (but not go before) " a loving heart to obey his commandments."

Brethren, the error which I am endeavouring in this discourse to correct, the distinction I am labouring to impress, makes all the difference in the world in practice.

If these two things, a lively faith in Christ and a holy life, or holiness, were things perfectly separate and independent of each other, then, though it be very true that we must have both of them to secure to us our heavenly inheritance, it would signify nothing in what order we obtained the two—the lively faith might either go before or follow after. But if it be true, that that " holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," is absolutely dependent on a lively faith in Christ going before, and establishing our interest in the Redeemer, and securing to us the Holy Spirit of God to help our infirmities, instruct our understandings, and incline our hearts ; then it is obvious that very great and incalculable mischief

may be done by placing these things in their wrong order and connection. According to this wrong order, the conciliatory exhortation of Jesus should not be, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" but rather, Come not to me as long as ye are weary and heavily burdened with a sense of sin and unworthiness; but first lead a righteous, godly, and sober life; first get rid of the burden of sin; and then, having done your best, you may venture to apply to me to supply all your deficiencies: you may then have confidence in my help, and find refreshment under my easy yoke.

But, God be praised! our merciful High Priest did not leave mankind with so poor a prospect of salvation: "He came to call, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "They that are whole," said he, "need not a physician." And his apostles speak precisely the same language: "As ambassadors, in Christ's stead, we beseech you to be reconciled to God." In one word, then, it is to Christ Jesus that the penitent is to go for every Gospel blessing without exception; and in that way every one of them is to be obtained—that is, by humble, earnest application in deep

penitence and lively faith. The restoration of the true penitent consists in this very thing ; that in having applied, and in continuing to apply habitually to the Saviour, in God's appointed way, and in relying on the promises of Him who cannot deceive, he obtains through faith an interest in the Redeemer's merits, and through his Spirit he is enabled to mortify the deeds of the body, and ever hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life.—Whoever supposes that this lively faith in Christ, of which I here speak, may by possibility consist with a man's allowing himself in the practice of sin, proves, to my mind, that he has imbibed entirely erroneous notions of this matter. “ How should we ” (says St. Paul, speaking on this very point) “ who are dead unto sin, live any longer therein ? ” There can be no application to Christ without penitence, without a hatred of sin ;—this hatred of sin is the very thing that constitutes the burden with which the man is weary and heavy laden ;—and it is this very circumstance, of being weary and heavy laden, which impels the miserable penitent to obey the compassionate call of his Redeemer, “ Come unto me.” He obeys the call, he obtains the promised rest : the Spirit

helps his infirmities, and he fights the good fight manfully, and exhibits a holy, Christian practice, to his life's end.

Christian brethren, a word of serious and close application to the conscience shall now conclude this discourse. The subject we have been considering greatly concerns the personal salvation of every one of us ; indeed, if it were not so, I know not that I should be justified in detaining your attention so long. Mere theoretical discussions, much less entertaining essays which terminate in speculation only, have no great business in the pulpit. Whatever has a tendency to make clearer the narrow road to eternal life, and to incline us to walk in that road, is the proper province of a Christian instructor : and if, on any one occasion, I have ever lost sight of those grand objects, it has happened entirely contrary to my intention. And as my conscience enables me to make this declaration with the most unaffected truth, I would hope that an abiding belief and conviction on your minds, that what you hear from the pulpit is said for the single purpose of promoting your eternal salvation, will always be a means of securing your serious attention. A very celebrated enemy of

Christian doctrines used to say, "I can forgive any thing that is said to me, or of me, be it what it may, when I believe the thing is said in the design of promoting my eternal salvation." So completely does that single consideration over-balance every thing else.

In this manner, my beloved brethren, I would have you judge of this morning's discourse. You are my witnesses, that, though for many years past both the pulpit and the press have teemed with controversial discussions respecting Calvinism and Calvinistic tenets, ye have never heard from me, during a period of twenty years' experience, one single word on those contentious and difficult subjects. The honest reason is, I have never yet seen cause to think that I could introduce those subjects into the pulpit with profit to the one thing needful, the grand concern of the soul's salvation. Nay, I go further than this; I am convinced that the giving of much time and thought to such subjects not only does no good, but is even injurious to congregations in general. They not only perplex and harass the minds of persons in many instances, but tend also to draw the attention, in almost all instances, from considerations

that are absolutely essential to a rise and progress of true religion in the soul : and I will venture to affirm positively, from the experience which I have myself had of religious characters, that the more thoroughly a man is in earnest in seeking the road to Heaven, the less anxiety he will have about controversial disputes and contentions ; and, on the contrary (as might be expected), the more he suffers his mind to dwell on the mysterious and intricate questions which such topics introduce, and the more embarrassed his mind becomes concerning their consequences, the less will he be disposed to attend to his own personal improvement in practical religion. Hence, in cases where the thoughts are greatly occupied and hampered with Calvinistical difficulties, a thing that has often happened, the very best advice in the world is to aim at filling the mind with more profitable considerations. Cease to puzzle yourself concerning the foreknowledge of God, and all the metaphysical subtilties connected with the consideration of that wonderful attribute, and study your Bible according to its plain, simple, grammatical meaning ; and be only anxious to find *in yourself*, on a strict examination, those evidences which mark the

character of a disciple of Christ ; and if you are deficient in these, never rest till you find you are obtaining them. By a little labour in this way of scriptural wisdom, you will do more for yourself than by years of fruitless toil in the Calvinistic labyrinth.

Moreover, brethren, a taste for dispute and controversy in religion, is the most mischievous thing in the world. The acuter man defeats his adversary, acquires a little perverted knowledge of the Bible, and he quotes passages for the purpose of *victory*. Whether right or wrong in the part he espouses, his good temper is sure to suffer loss—he is disgusted if conquered, and he becomes proud and ostentatious if he gain the victory ; and at any rate he is apt to fancy that he has been studying religion.—I have now first mentioned this subject after twenty years' silence, and for the purpose of shewing you that the great stress in religion is not to be placed there. You may be either a warm Calvinist, or a warm Anti-Calvinist, and yet have no true religion in your frame. The doctrines of grace—the doctrines of salvation by Jesus Christ our Lord—do not depend on nice theoretic! speculations. But, mark me, my beloved brethren !

they *do* depend, they very much depend, on that important distinction which we have been fully considering this morning. There must be faith; there must be works; there must be penitence; there must be a *restoration* of the lost image of God; and, lastly, the sanctified effect of a righteous, godly, sober life, must *follow* this restoration—it cannot go before. It is my heart's desire, it is my fervent prayer, that ye would make a trial of this method. Thousands never have tried it yet: many who hear me this day must know they have never tried it: many there are who cannot but own that they have always been so perfectly satisfied with their own views of religion, that they have as yet never seriously attended to the practical difference now laid before you.

Let conscience honestly decide, whether in what follows I do not fairly state the condition of many. You were baptized, and call yourselves Christians; and you have performed the external duties of religion, and, on the whole, are tolerably well satisfied with the lives you have led; and you support a hope in the mercy of God at the day of judgment. While in health and vigour, you don't think much about these things;

and when health totters, or conscience presses a little too hard upon you, you dispel all anxious and melancholic scruples by what you call innocent and cheerful amusements. Now the first question is, Do I seem to understand your case? for whenever a person is afflicted with any bodily malady, it always affords him satisfaction, and inspires him with confidence, to find his physician appear to understand his distemper. With this view and description of your situation, I must inform you that you fall sadly short of holiness, even in its lowest acceptation: neither are such characters seeking holiness *in the right way*. It has been the object of this discourse to point out to you distinctly both what holiness is, and also how ye are to attain it; and never forget, for one moment, that declaration of my text, that, “without it, no man shall see the Lord.”—Now, if the blessing of Almighty God do but attend my endeavours, the consequence will be, that some, I hope many, present, will begin to reflect on the past, and to say, “Never, I fear, have I yet entertained just notions of holiness. If this morning’s instruction be right, I have certainly much to learn. I must study my Bible, and ex-

amine both what is the foundation and what the superstructure of Christ's religion; and I must try whether my heart is in harmony with the wonderful dispensations of God as exhibited in man's redemption. If my heart does not vibrate to the revealed account of these things, it seems I know as yet nothing either of the essence or of the beauty of holiness. And further; if this instructor be right, there is in the mode of attaining holiness a certain order, a certain connection, to be observed, which I never before suspected: and thus have I almost every thing to begin afresh. Farewel the follies and vanities of life! When I have settled the important points respecting holiness, it will be time enough to consider whether in the practice of it I shall have leisure for indulgence in such worldly things."

If, through the grace of Almighty God, such resolutions as these are forming in the minds of this numerous and attentive audience, it ought to be my most fervent prayer that, by the same gracious and powerful help, they may speedily be carried into good effect, and prove abundantly productive of that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." For indeed, my brethren, this is no trifling matter. We never part from each other

for a year or two, but, with several of us, the grave has for ever decided all disputes and controversies, and all our hopes and all our fears. The youngest have not long to live, the middle aged are hastening to become old, and the collins are preparing for the aged. How gladly would I excite in all ranks and orders a greater attention to the one thing needful. My sole object is the salvation of your immortal souls ; and every sentence I utter, if I judge right, tends directly to that purpose ; and, agreeably to this, I also endeavour to suppress and stifle every thought and word which might, by perversion or mistake, or in any possible way, produce a contrary effect. Fully conscious of these intentions, and fully convinced that the good works which I have been enforcing are of the purest and most holy kind, and that they can arise in no other order or connection but that which I have now described, I commit, with humble hope, all that has been said to the blessing of Almighty God, who must give the increase even when Paul plants and Apollos waters.

SERMON V.

PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL AT CARLISLE,
DURING THE ASSIZES, AUGUST 1813.

ECCLES. viii. 11.

*Because sentence against an evil work is not
executed speedily, therefore the heart of the
sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.*

THE difference of principle which usually manifests itself in the Divine government of the world, when compared with that which influences the conduct of human rulers and legislators, is so great, and at the same time so obvious, as rarely to have escaped the observation of persons of piety and reflection. One striking instance of this difference is suggested by the awful and emphatical declaration in my text, that “because

sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

In what is called God's moral government of mankind, this lamentable truth is exemplified every day in a thousand instances. For example : though it must be allowed that intemperance and debaucheries do at length meet their almost certain punishment, by undermining the strongest constitution and most vigorous health, yet by no means does this happen speedily. And again : though ambition, no doubt, carries along with it its own punishment, nevertheless how often does it thrive for a considerable season, extending its baleful influence among families, kingdoms, and empires, before it meets with the execution of the sentence pronounced against its evil works ! The same may be said of envy, malice, treachery, and innumerable other bad passions, whose evil works for a great length of time are seen to flourish, like so many green bay-trees, in this world of vanity and vexation. Add to this, that in a multitude of cases no sentence at all is executed against men's evil works in *this world* : the sentence of the merited punishment is not only delayed, or suspended, during many

tranquil and peaceful years of the lives of the wicked, but remains to be pronounced from the judgment-seat of Christ at the resurrection from the dead.

The maxims by which human laws are established and directed in the administration of justice, by no means resemble those of the Supreme Governor of the universe in this important matter. In general, when the nature of the crime is ascertained, and the just sentence pronounced at a human tribunal, that sentence is very speedily executed. Even when the nature of the punishment consists in long confinement, or banishment, the execution of the sentence begins without delay ; and therefore such cases form no exception to the general principle of a speedy execution of the sentence.

This striking deviation in the practice of the very best human establishments, from what we observe in the Divine administration of justice, naturally leads men of considerate minds and dispassionate judgments to reflect on the grounds and reasons of this difference ; and the rather, as we are bid to imitate our Heavenly Father, and to be perfect as he is perfect : and still further, as it

may seem very often to be in our own power, in this respect, to imitate the Great Governor of the universe,—to be merciful as he is merciful ; and therefore to suspend the just rod of vengeance, as he often suspends it, and to be less speedy in the execution of our penal decisions.

The serious consideration of such moral and religious inquiries as this, is of great practical importance, and especially when the doubts or difficulties admit of a satisfactory explanation.

In the first place, then, I observe, that there is no doubt whatever of the fact. The *Divine* sentence against men's evil works is, in fact, *not* speedily executed. Every day's experience proves this to be so. The insolence of the proud, the insults of the haughty and powerful, the tyranny of the oppressor, the frauds of the extortioner, go unpunished for a series of years ; and in many instances the most profligate and grievous offenders, whose repeated crimes have long deserved the halter or the gibbet, are suffered to die unmoled in their beds, surrounded with every external blessing which ample wealth and possessions, numerous dependants, and manifold comforts and conveniences, can supply for the mitigation or

relief of the various evils incident to age and sickness, and other sufferings and infirmities which are the common lot of mortality. Moreover, the holy Scriptures themselves confirm this testimony of experience. The fact to which I allude is evidently implied in the words of my text. The passage runs thus : “ *Because* sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” Here it is plainly taken for granted, that in the Divine economy it is not usual for sentence against evil works to be executed speedily ; and that this lenity and forbearance on the part of Almighty God is the reason why “ the heart of the sons of men is *fully* set in them to do evil.” And the same doctrine is taught by our Saviour in the New Testament : “ They say in their heart, the Lord delayeth his coming,” and thereupon presume to “ beat their fellow-servants, and to eat, and to drink, and to be drunken.”

But further : not only the profane and impious take advantage of God’s mercy in suspending the execution of his threatenings against wickedness of every kind ; we find that the most pious and holy men that ever lived, have sometimes been

disposed to murmur at the Divine administration, or, at least, have been perplexed and confounded in reflecting on the prosperity of the wicked. “They are not in trouble like other men; neither are they plagued like other men....They have more than their heart could wish....Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world: They increase in riches....Verily, then, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.”

From such facts and declarations as these, a two-fold question naturally arises:—First, How is it that the all-wise and powerful Governor of the Universe should so long hide his wrathful indignation against the wickedness of mankind, that their hearts should become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and be so deluded by temporal prosperity as to dream that justice shall never awaken and disturb them in thus fully setting themselves to do evil? The second part of the question is, If this be right; if the Author of all created being cannot do wrong; and if our Creator in the moral government of his creation exhibits a steady example of forbearance and suspension of punishment, notwithstanding the ingratitude of

many of his creatures, who harden their consciences against the Divine goodness, and increase their final condemnation by an impenitent perseverance in evil doing ; why do not human legislators, human rulers and governors, imitate their righteous Maker and Judge in these his merciful dispensations ? Why may not they (it will be said) be merciful, as their Heavenly Father is merciful ? Why not delay, or suspend, the severity of punishment, when the benevolent practice of forbearance, notwithstanding the base return often made by the ungrateful and impenitent, is thus supported by an indisputable and unerring Example and Authority ?

The complete and satisfactory answer to both the parts of this question, must be sought for in those peculiar attributes of Almighty God which distinguish the dispensations of Supreme Wisdom from the proceedings of human judicatures. The Omniscience of God penetrates every concealment. His eye never slumbers nor sleeps. No cunning device, no artful management, can escape his vigilance or interrupt his wise determinations. The punishment which He purposes to inflict, whether sooner or later, is inevitable.—We see,

therefore, at once, that such a Being may, with the greatest safety, adopt a peculiar system of judicial proceeding, and even suspend the execution of his threatenings against crimes and immoralities of every kind. There is no danger in the merciful declaration of such a Being, that “when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.” He still holds the balance and the rod: not one hair-breadth beyond the Divine permission can the most perverse and obdurate sinner proceed, though aided by all the created powers of darkness and rebellion: and hence it is, that, even in his anger, a gracious God is slow to shut the gates of mercy on mankind.

How different all this appears, when we shift the scene to reflect on that necessity from which originate all human laws and their speedy execution! Undoubtedly the first thoughts of a careless observer might be, that the imbecility and imperfection of our faculties would render it the more necessary that we should implicitly imitate a model of infinite perfection; but such a conclusion is soon discovered to be fallacious reasoning.

The imperfection and defect of human powers constitute the very reason why the creature must not pretend to imitate his Creator in this matter. An imperfect being, whose utmost care and sagacity often fail to trace and detect the greatest offenders, must not trifle with justice, when he has once traced and fairly detected the violaters of the laws of his country. Should a human judge, in remitting a penalty, or relaxing its rigour, exceed his just authority, he has not faculties always to foresee the effect of such remission or relaxation, and much less has he power to guard against its abuse. Impenitent and obdurate offenders will probably multiply on his hands: the old ones will grow more cunning at evasion and excuse; new ones will be encouraged by the lenity of the courts of law: legislators will find their compassion and tenderness abused; and, perhaps, when it is too late, they will have to lament their total inability to check the progress of vice, and suppress the commission of crimes, by any provisions or regulations they can devise.

This I take to be a just account of the difference observable between the Divine and human administration of justice, in regard to the single

point of a speedy or a protracted execution of the sentence. Infinite Power and Infinite Knowledge present impregnable barriers against any dangerous abuses of the lenity and forbearance of the Supreme Being. Abuses, indeed, may, and will, take place, to the everlasting shame and contempt of the impenitent abusers of the grace and mercy of God, but still without the slightest danger to the reputation or good order of the Divine government; for God will ever take care that his judgments shall not only be respected in due season, but also appear in themselves to be holy, just, and good. On the other hand, both in the assigning of temporal penalties, and in the infliction of them, human governors are bound to be directed in all things by a supreme regard for the public safety entrusted to their care. They must indulge no capricious conjectures concerning any imaginary good to be obtained by compassionate deviations from the rigour of the law. Such beings, limited as they are in intellect in general, and more especially in fore-knowledge, must have a steady eye both on the prevention and the suppression of crimes. They must make no hazardous experiments.

From these considerations, I might now proceed, with much advantage, to expatiate on the beauty and excellence of the British constitution; and more particularly of that part of it which consists in the wise and equal administration of the laws. I might illustrate the formation of this admirable structure, by shewing how the principles above described have been faithfully adhered to in the several periods of the English history: how the will of God has been often collected from the holy Scriptures themselves; and how the sacred doctrines of the Bible have been industriously woven into many parts of the jurisprudence of this country, and have ever been regarded, by our ancient and best legislators, with the most pious respect and reverence. And again, how, when the Divine will has not been directly expressed, or when, for the reasons already given, the Divine example of forbearance could not be followed with safety to the state, yet the general security, happiness, and tranquillity of the whole community have still been invariably kept in view as the grand directing principle. Then, how the wise and strenuous efforts of great and virtuous men; how the numerous contentions, struggles, successes, and

interests of different orders and parties have at length terminated in the present glorious fabric of the English Constitution: and lastly, how the judicial part of our constitution embraces all the great ends and blessings of social union—blessings enjoyed by Englishmen in a perfection in vain to be sought for in any other country of the world.

But, having thus very briefly adverted to those topics which are frequently reviewed by the inhabitants of these happy dominions with much triumph and exultation, I forbear at present to insist further on them for these reasons:—Already they have often been dilated on, both from the pulpit and the press, and frequently with an abundantly more exact and profound knowledge of the subject of jurisprudence than I am authorised to make any pretensions to: and in the next place, the little time which remains, of what is usually allotted to a discourse from the pulpit, will, I think, be more pertinently employed, and perhaps to much better purpose, by me, in suggesting a few cautionary observations of a religious nature, tending, I trust, to guard against certain circumstances which sometimes take place in the course of the administration of justice, and may have the effect of di-

minishing the veneration of the public for our judicial decisions : and surely I need not premise, that a lamentable effect of this sort will inevitably ensue, whenever the reputation of any of the several parties concerned in those decisions is observed to sink in the general estimation.

The Judges, who explain and lay down the law, with the Juries, who pronounce the verdicts, have to discharge so important and conspicuous a part, both in cases of criminal jurisdiction and in questions of civil contention and dispute, that they may well call forth our primary thoughts and attention.

In regard to the Judges of his Majesty's courts of law : though I think a preacher of the Gospel is in no one thing less to be defended, or on any occasion more deserving of reprehension, than when he condescends to contaminate the discharge of his sacred functions with the slightest suspicion of adulatory commendations, yet have I no scruple to add, that it is the glorious privilege of the times in which we live, that, even from the pulpit, a Minister of the Gospel, without incurring the smallest censure for courting the favour and patronage of persons of rank and eminence, may be allowed to

express his unbounded confidence in the virtuous and impartial integrity of those persons who are appointed by his Majesty to preside in our courts of justice. On this head, which, with the rest of my countrymen, I consider as one of the brightest ornaments in the triumphs of British liberty, I could not well say less; and I am prevented from saying more, by the presence of those venerable persons who are more immediately concerned in the application of these very sincere acknowledgments, and who are habitually receiving from their own consciences a far more delicate and acceptable reward, for their learned and patient exertions in the cause of truth and justice and impartiality, than any homage that can be conferred on them by the warmest and most grateful effusions of the several counties and districts through which they pass, and which are profiting by the beneficent effects of their labours. Be it, then, our never-failing prayer, that those who represent our gracious Sovereign in the administration of the laws of his dominions, may ever continue “truly and indifferently to administer justice, to the punishment of wickedness and vice, and to the maintenance of true religion and virtue.”

On this occasion it might seem almost superfluous to add, how very much the upright conduct of the Jurors depends upon the deportment of the Judge who presides. His very reputation for piety and religion will inspire them with a reverential awe and solemnity of sentiment—and this is a disposition of mind excellently preparative for the due consideration of grave and weighty questions. Moreover, in doubtful cases, most jurors, who are possessed of modesty and diffidence of spirit, are observed to be anxious to discover what is the real opinion of a wise, impartial, and conscientious judge: and even should a juror happen to be impanelled, whose extraordinary ignorance seems incurable, or hardened conscience impregnable, still, even in such extreme cases, the admonition and example of a grave and virtuous judge are likely to be most efficacious in awakening latent sensibilities, and impressing on the mind a sense of the importance of an oath, and making a man feel the heavy responsibility under which he is acting both in regard to this world and the next.

The Witnesses who furnish evidence in our courts of law, constitute a very material part of that apparatus which is essential to many judicial de-

terminations. And on this head, it would be with a most painful reluctance if an impartial person, after due examination and inquiry, should be constrained to admit that a great deal may be noticed which merits the most pointed disapprobation of a religious and moral observer. And further, in thus withholding from many witnesses the tribute of commendation, the painful sensation, of which in such case it is impossible we should divest ourselves, would be greatly increased, if, on further inquiry and comparison, it should be found that in the county of Cumberland there is peculiar cause for complaints and animadversions of this kind. Censures of witnesses for their insincerity, partiality, and even false representations, are no doubt often multiplied, in the various reports of trials, beyond both reason and truth; and I am well aware that a *few* notorious instances of false swearing, or laboured equivocation, are capable, by their consequence and connection with circumstances, of giving rise to many unfounded stories, and of defiling in that way many pages of the history of judicial transactions. I am also well aware, that mutual accusations and censures are not only apt to produce heat, and

animosity, and slanderous imputations, but often are also effective in sowing the seeds of permanent dissensions in families and among neighbours, and thus become a fruitful source of future hatreds, jealousies, and contentions. Hence, witnesses come into court having long ago determined on the part they mean to act: their oath is looked on by them as a mere ceremony, which they must go through before they can be heard; and their main object is to make the best of the cause they come to support:

Freely and ingenuously I have admitted there may be much exaggeration in reports of this kind—I hope there is, I believe there is—nevertheless, it is, I fear, not to be denied, that, after making every just allowance which equity and candour can require, we are still in these parts under the imputation of contributing our full share to that discredit which attaches to the character of unfaithful witnesses. Most seriously, therefore, would I exhort every one, who is likely to act a part in the important concern of speaking on oath as a witness in any cause, to endeavour by his example to counteract as much as possible the disgraceful charge of unauthorised swearing, or even of any species of

concealment or prevarication ; which, in fact, are neither more nor less than false swearing. The discreditable imputation under which we labour, is not to be refuted by mere denials of the fact. It is always impossible to refute general charges of that sort, and for the most part it is unwise to attempt it. There is no way in the world to recover the lost reputation of a county in this matter, but by the very reverse of that conduct which produced the imputation. It must have arisen, I think, from *some* well-known instances of trifling with the solemn obligation of an oath : whether from a considerable number of such cases, it is not for me to speak positively. Slander and exaggeration are sisters in iniquity, and they usually co-operate with each other ; yet, slanderous as mankind are, there is in general some foundation to support a strong and an abiding charge of this nature. Let us then, my friends, look well to ourselves ; and remember, that every instance of fair, open, ingenuous conduct, in a witness, is not only a *valuable*, perhaps an *inestimable*, contribution towards the just decision of the point immediately under legal investigation ; but it is also an instance of a conscientious discharge of the

sacred duty of doing “to others as we would that they should do unto us”—a duty which, when discharged on right principles, may, by its very example, do great good, and which will infallibly be found registered in those books, which St. John informs us will be opened at the last day, when the dead will be judged out of those things which are written in the books.

The considerate part of this audience will be aware that these observations are by no means *particularly* intended for such gross and notorious examples of false swearing as are capable of being reached by the laws of the land, and where the offenders are made to receive the just sentence for their crimes at the tribunals of human jurisdiction. No doubt every syllable I have said includes *such* instances of false swearing as well as all others; and strange it might seem, if, in discoursing on the iniquity of bearing false witness, the clearest and most decided instances of the commission of the crime were to be looked on as excluded from a religious consideration of the subject. This, however, being distinctly understood, I would here put my hearers in mind of the latter clause of my text, which directs me, in a very decisive tone, to make the

important, because instructive, distinction just mentioned—viz. “ Because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” On these words I ground the manifest distinction between those gross acts of perjury which are punishable before a tribunal of human judicature, and those much more numerous instances of transgression in witnesses which are marked by evasions, suppressions of truth, prevarications, and such like; all which, when they take place under the sanction of an oath, amount to nothing short of false swearing. And it is on the account of such multiplied instances of iniquity in the conduct of witnesses, that the force of my text, and the wisdom contained in its instruction, merit the peculiar notice of all those who are called on to bear witness under the solemnity of an oath. You observe, that whenever the charge of perjury can be ascertained, and the heavy guilt legally fixed on the offender, the sentence against the evil work is then, as in other cases, speedily pronounced and executed, by those to whom the general security of the state is entrusted; and on this account it is, that the instances of punishable false swear-

ing are found to be so rare, compared with those other cases which, though perhaps equally atrocious, nevertheless evade the strong but cautious grasp of legal animadversion. Thus the scriptural account is remarkably confirmed. The *Divine* sentence against men's evil works, in neither of the kinds of bearing false witness, is speedily executed, and on that account the heart of man is fully bent to do evil, so far as it is not overawed by the near prospect of feeling the vengeance of the law of the land; and hence, where no *human* penalties stare the false witness in the face, he bids defiance to the threatenings contained in his Bible, merely because they seem more distant, and perhaps uncertain; or because the offender secretly flatters himself with erroneous notions of the mercy of God; or, at best, indulges half-formed, fluctuating hopes, that he himself may repent before he dies.

Be it, then, well remembered, that my text applies itself with peculiar force to all those cases where an unprincipled witness has no scruple in evading, disguising, or absolutely misrepresenting the truth, provided he can but keep clear of the lash of the law. Such a man's heart is fully set upon evil—that is, he gives a loose to his interests,

passions, partialities, and friendships; he is regardless of censure; he values but little that good name which is pronounced by the Wise Man to be “better than precious ointment, and rather to be chosen than great riches;” he even despises the long-suffering of God, which should lead him to repentance.

Now, as in the management of the various cases which are brought into our courts of judicature, it is well known there are thousands of instances where a full conviction of bearing false witness will be left on the mind of the most candid and impartial observer, although no legal proof of the crime can be made out; and further, as the degrees of this crime, even when the proof is sufficiently clear, in many instances cannot possibly be ascertained; a teacher of religion and morals is naturally led to consider the present as a seasonable opportunity for inquiring, what are the likeliest methods he has to propose to stem such a torrent of vice and immorality, as, from the single source of bearing false witness, may seem to threaten, as it were by inundation, to sweep away the virtuous principle of integrity and good faith, which forms the strongest and most durable cement of peace, union,

and good neighbourhood among the members of the community?—I answer : the very same passage of holy Writ, which *directly* points out the malady, does *indirectly* suggest the remedy.

“ The heart of the sons of men,” says my text, “ is fully set upon doing evil, *because* sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily :” in other words, the fear of God is the grand desideratum,—that fear which by the Psalmist is justly called “ the beginning of wisdom.” In fact, when the fear of God, considered as a ruling, practical principle, is either sunk to a low ebb, or perhaps totally extinguished in the human heart, the inevitable consequence is, that men will abuse the *Divine patience* and mercy ; and, instead of displaying thankfulness and gratitude, will harden themselves in wickedness, because sentence against their evil works is not speedily executed. Nor is it possible for any thing to correct this state of mind, and mend the practice connected with it, but the restoration of this very principle of a religious fear of God and his laws, with an awful apprehension of the consequences of transgressing them.

Should any one, therefore, be now present, who

unfortunately supposes that he need not much burden his conscience with reflections concerning a day of future retribution ; and that, in bearing false witness on solemn occasions, he may indulge his own will, gratify his own party, as much as he pleases, at the expense of truth, provided he do but prudently avoid all temporal penalties ;—let me be permitted to expostulate for a few moments with such a person, while I plead the cause of God, of religion, and of morality.

Is it true, then, my friend, that you have actually arrived at that pitch of insensibility of conscience, that, as a witness, you can enter a court of justice with any other intention than to serve the sacred cause of truth and justice ? Or are you as yet, only as it were in the high road to attain the full stature and perfection of such heinous depravity and corruption of principle ? For I will freely allow, that no man becomes at once an adept in bearing false witness. He first evades ; he equivocates—conscience remonstrates—he evades and equivocates again, but with less reluctance : then, finding himself safe from punishment, and perhaps rewarded with some temporal advantages, he begins to think less and

less of the awful threatenings of Scripture: he finds out either that they are overcharged, or only intended to overawe sinners of the very first class; and, as the Divine sentence is not speedily executed, he hopes, and soon believes, it never will be executed!

When the fear of the Almighty's angry judgment is thus weakened in the mind, every subsequent step of a witness's departure from the path of integrity seems easy and natural. Remove the fear of God, and then the solemn appeal, "So help me God!" will soon dwindle into a mere ceremony that has lost its force and efficacy. Remove the fear of God, and you may soon persuade yourself, like one of the ancient sects of philosophers, that the Supreme Power is indolent, inefficient, and regardless of human affairs; or, agreeably to the Psalmist's report, you may say in your heart, "Tush, God hath forgotten: He hideth his face." Once convinced that the great God of universal nature takes no notice of the petty strifes and squabbles of human life, you learn to repeat the words, "So help me God," with the most intrepid assurance.

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy

neighbour," is an express command of God ; but His extraordinary patience in not speedily executing sentence against breaches of it, has sometimes the effect of debauching even the understanding itself, in a most surprising manner. For example : because the crime of bearing false witness has not been speedily punished, some would conclude that the practice of it cannot be so very displeasing to God as many have supposed it to be. It does not appear, as they think, in the present state of things, that God is extreme to mark what is done amiss ; and on this account they would infer, that he will not enter into judgment with such offenders, even in the world to come. This absurd and most dangerous inference will carry men every length the arch-enemy and tempter of mankind can desire. It will soon undermine that sacred and inviolable regard to truth and sincerity, which is to be preserved by good men at every risk. It affects to treat the dictates of an honest conscience as the offspring of narrow views and principles ; and to explain that reluctance which an ingenuous mind must ever feel when tempted to disguise or evade the truth, and much

more to introduce deliberate and interested falsehood, by ascribing it to a morbid sensibility, or perhaps the prejudice of an unfortunate education!—Lastly, in this manner false witnesses find out that this world could not go on without the operation of some prudential disguises and concealments; that strict honesty and plain dealing would become a prey to deep artifice and dexterous management; that the wealth and property of the ignorant and the simple would often be plundered by the cunning and worldly minded; and that, in many instances, such traps and snares would be laid, for what are called religious and virtuous characters, as can only be encountered by systematic precautions and devices of the same class, and which, it is allowed, cannot stand before the unbending severity and strictness of the laws of religion and morality.

Thus, my friends, I have briefly pointed out, more particularly in the matter of bearing false witness, the rapid progress of vice, when once a sense of the fear of God is weakened or removed. Because sentence is not speedily executed against men's evil works, they venture to justify them-

selves, and, in spite of the most clear denunciations of holy Writ, they conclude that the administration of the Divine government will always continue to be what it appears at present.

Indeed, the subject I have been handling is of general import to us all. There is in the very best of men an unhappy tendency to forget God ; and well would it be, if every one of us took more especial care lest the forbearance and long-suffering of God should increase our condemnation, instead of leading us towards that God who never desireth the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live.

In regard to the particular application of this subject to cases of false swearing, all those here present, whose consciences can fairly acquit them of censure, may say, with the great Grecian Moralists, “ We are not the persons intended, and can therefore have no pretensions to take offence.” But if conscience should, in any instance, dictate a verdict of guilty, you will, I hope, bless God from the bottom of the heart, that his good providence has called you to hear this day’s admonitions ; and as you love your immortal welfare, be sure you retreat quickly from the precipice to

which you have been fast advancing. Despise no longer the riches of God's grace in delaying the punishment of evil works. Rest satisfied, on the highest authority, that such a treatment of God's mercy and compassion tends to harden the heart, and make it fully set to do evil.

After the tribute of very sincere praise which I have paid to the Judges of our courts of judicature, it cannot be suspected that I should not have the highest respect for that very learned body of men from which they are selected by the sovereign authority ; and it is, therefore, with much diffidence and hesitation that I venture to subjoin a few concluding sentences, for the consideration of those truly respectable members of our courts of judicature, whose peculiar province it is to modify and digest the materials of complaint and defence, to examine and cross-examine witnesses, and to address juries on the leading points of trials of various descriptions. These professional characters, denominated Advocates, notwithstanding the deference and respect which is both due, and is actually paid, to the judges who preside over the trials and instruct the jurors, it is well known possess great weight in judicial determinations.

Their learning, their eloquence, and their experience in law-suits, supply them with the most powerful means of influence; and there is no person, who has frequently attended public trials, who has not felt conscious of the impression which such a combination of skill and talent is calculated to produce. In point of fact, there is the most positive proof of the number and the magnitude of the successful impressions which they make: the Advocates of this description are crowned with victory in a large proportion of causes; and, as the reward of their repeated triumphs, their clients become numerous, and the protection and assistance of so much skill and talent are sought after and secured with the utmost care and vigilance. It is, however, because considerable doubts are harboured by the public, whether frequently they do not succeed in making the worse cause appear the better, that a preacher may be justified in suggesting some hints and cautions on a subject of so great importance. Fully sensible of my own inexperience, and want of ability in this matter to form a decisive judgment, much less to lay down practical rules for its regulation, I most earnestly protest against any construction of what I shall

say as implying a positive opinion on a subject of so much difficulty : and I further request, that, in suggesting the following hints and cautions for the consideration of the candid and conscientious, no person will fancy that he sees meanings involved in obscure animadversions, and secret inuendos of much deeper import than I choose to express.

It is, however, in the treatment of witnesses, and in addresses to jurors, that I imagine there may be considerable room for suspecting that dangerous liberties are sometimes taken by counsel in the zeal both of defence and accusation. Far be it from me to pretend to ascertain the just limits which ought never to be exceeded, either in one case or the other. Yet may I still, without the imputation of temerity, be allowed to assert that these limits have sometimes been actually exceeded. The advocate stands in the place of his clients ; and therefore, in addressing the jurors, who are to pronounce upon the causes of his clients, he will no doubt be justified in using all the earnestness which the clients themselves would use : but it will not follow from this concession, that still there may not often be introduced,

in favour of clients, much *indefensible* management, which the long experience of advocates may have taught them to be efficacious in misleading a jury and witnesses, or in drawing their attention from the main point. This is the species of procedure which I would deprecate, as admitting of no excuse or palliation—except, perhaps, that the advocates on the opposite side will probably do the same; and that, therefore, if you do not what is called your *best*, you may be said to desert or abandon the interests of the clients, which you are bound to support. And here would I humbly hope that the proper answer may be, that both sides should be exhorted never more to have recourse to such experiments, either in defence or accusation. The practice does no honour to men of integrity and education. In purer times it would scarcely be borne, and at all times the example is pernicious beyond calculation.

In the treatment of witnesses, I fear, the practice of advocates has sometimes been liable to considerable exception. For though here *again* I am poorly qualified to judge of that degree of liberty which may be justified, or even found necessary for the purpose of extorting the truth from a sullen,

interested, or unprincipled witness; yet I must not hesitate to complain, should it ever appear that an honest, ingenuous, and conscientious witness, for the purpose of stifling evidence, is designedly puzzled, confounded, stupified, and thus prevented from clearly furnishing the court with those truths which the counsel who examines him judges to be injurious to the cause of his client.

I know not whether I may be allowed to suppose, that in *any* cases it has ever really happened that an advocate of wisdom and reputation has, after a trial, been heard to express a complacent satisfaction on having obtained verdicts, by his address and management, against the clearest evidence. Such a species of triumph, I trust, cannot take place often: the practice itself would be unwise, as the principle is indefensible in the highest degree. The reputation in this way gained for skill in advocating causes, is at the expense of the love of integrity, and with the certain danger of bad example. Nor will any thing more contribute to render witnesses insincere, than the conviction that the man who interrogates them does it with the *express* design of confounding and puzzling their ideas, and rather with a view

to serve a particular cause, than to elicit the truth. The witness is thus put on his guard, and strives to counteract the intentions of the advocate by concealment and prevarication; and thus, in the struggle for victory between the witness and the advocate, the truth may easily be forgotten or stifled. Nor, in my judgment, can any thing be more injurious to the cause of justice and morality, than that language of triumph above alluded to, when used either by counsel or witnesses, on occasion of a victory thus iniquitously gained.

An honest witness meets with so few real difficulties, that he has little cause for conscientious scruples. The path of his conduct is narrow, and precisely marked. He must adhere to the truth, and suppress nothing that relates to the matter in agitation, even though the question be not put specifically to him.

But in regard to advocates, notwithstanding it is recorded to their honour that in many instances they have absolutely refused to plead in causes of manifest injustice and iniquity, it does not appear that they are always bound to abandon their clients, even when they think them in the wrong; for, such

is the frailty and such the imperfection of the human intellect, and such the doubtful nature of some questions, that both the judge and the jury may possibly concur in thinking better of a cause than the advocate of it may himself happen to think : but should it ever appear, that by insinuating address, or artful interrogatories, an upright witness should be made to give an evidence contrary to his real unbiassed judgment—should the sacred ends of justice be thereby defeated, and should the triumphs of the advocates on account of such victories be celebrated in the very face and memory of the public conviction—then, indeed, will have arrived the season for mourning over the remains of departed justice and equity. Irreparable mischief, over and above the particular injury to the party in the specific case, will be done by the pernicious example, in more ways than I can stop to enumerate. Moreover, I might justly question whether a practice of this sort would in the end prove even lucrative to the advocate ; and even if it should, he is to be warned, from the Highest Authority, that still it will assuredly not bring him peace at the last.

To conclude. As I have already observed that

the absence of the fear of God is the signal for opening the flood-gates of every species of vice and irreligion ; and as I have also illustrated this important truth by the consideration of those peculiar evils which have been the subject of this discourse ; it will not become a preacher of the Gospel of Christ to dismiss this respectable audience without adverting to the true scriptural method of preserving in the mind, and restoring to it when lost, this salutary principle of the fear of God, so absolutely essential to all moral and religious practice. It must be restored, it must be maintained in vigour, or the sons of men will infallibly harden themselves against God ; and because the Divine sentence is not executed speedily against evil works, their heart will be fully set in them to do evil.

And here you must expect from me no specious harangues or plausible lessons on the transcendent beauty and excellence of virtue. Neither I nor you have so learned Christ, if indeed ye hold fast, agreeably to St. Paul's exhortation, " the form of sound words," which ye have so often heard. The most celebrated moralist and most exquisite writer of Grecian antiquity observed, " that there

was something so fascinating in the charms of virtue, that, if she could but appear in a human form, mankind would be enamoured of her presence." That experiment was tried: perfection itself appeared in the form of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and men despised, rejected, and crucified him.

Now this most memorable event, the death of our Redeemer Jesus Christ, foreseen and pre-ordained in the counsels of God, establishes two important points, beyond all contradiction. The first point is, That as it was impossible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin; and as Jesus put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; the consideration of the necessity of such a price of redemption, demonstrates, with the most satisfactory evidence, that "all men are by nature the children of wrath." "If one died for all," says St. Paul, "then were all dead,"

The second point is, The native corruption of the human heart. The cause of men's being the children of wrath is, that the human heart is depraved and corrupted. Men are born in sin, and soon shew that "they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

On such grounds as these, our Church, in its Confession, teaches us every day to acknowledge on our knees, that “ *there is no health in us :*”—and I would to God that our hearts always harmonized with so just and scriptural a declaration ! To the same purpose, St. Paul, in enumerating the dreadful effects of the fall of man, observes, that “ *there is no fear of God before their eyes.*” Now the very point under our present consideration is, how to recover this lost principle of the fear of God, the absence of which makes such ravages in the world, and the presence of which, when in its full operation, would not only correct all the abuses we have described as taking place in judicial investigations and decisions, but even almost annihilate the necessity for a code of penal jurisprudence.

“ Restore thou them that are penitent,” is the prayer contained in the same Confession of our excellent Church ; which distinctly points out to the humbled sinner the way, and the only way, by which he can recover the lost favour of his Maker, and again possess those holy principles of a reverential fear, which will hereafter shew themselves in a sober, godly, and religious life. In other words ; the true penitent, conscious of utter unworthiness, and also of inability to

amend his life, without the grace of God preventing him that he may have a good will, and working with him when he has that will, learns to put his whole trust in the Redeemer for every spiritual blessing. On the ground of the promises, he prays for that Holy Spirit which is to purify him, and make him fear God and be zealous of good works. He looks on the Gospel as the true medicine for the maladies of human nature. His redemption is purchased by the blood of his Saviour : accordingly, he ranks himself under the banner of the Captain of his salvation, and fights the good fight manfully against the world, the flesh, and the devil, unto his life's end.

Such is the Gospel of Christ ; and such is the way to make a right use of it. The followers of Christ in this way recover a due sense of the fear of God, and live habitually under its influence. They love their neighbours as themselves ; they adorn their profession by good works, and let their light shine before men that they may see them—in fact, that they may see what the humbling and restorative doctrines of Revelation can do for our fallen nature, as well as what all the ostentatious pharisaical pomp and pretension of philosophers cannot do. Such, I

repeat it, is the Gospel of Christ ; and it may well challenge all the efforts of ancient wisdom combined together, to produce any plan or contrivance worthy of being compared with it, either in principle or operation, for the recovery of a perverse and untoward generation, sunk in ignorance and impieties, and lost to all pure and spiritual obedience towards its great Creator and Benefactor. Let the Philosophers produce every argument they can invent ; let them enlarge on the beauty and excellence of virtue ; let them pronounce the will free to choose the good and refuse the evil ; still that single sentence, “ if ye love me, keep my commandments,” contains in it more profundity of wisdom, and more efficacious and systematic contrivance, than all the numerous and heavy volumes of the philosophers, and all the rich and extensive libraries of the learned, for the blessed purpose of bringing back the degenerate sons and daughters of Adam to a willing, rational, and spiritual service of the righteous Father of spirits, who never desires the death of a sinner ; and to a humble and grateful sense of their immense obligations to his Son, who redeems them both from the penalty and the dominion of sin.

SERMON VI.

JOHN xx. 17.

Go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.—

IT is generally observed, that the last words of great and good men are remembered, as being peculiarly important, and deserving very particular attention. How much more, then, do merit our notice, the last words of Him who “*spake as never man spake ;*” who is God as well as man,—“ Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God !” I have chosen, then, these words, which were some of the precious *last* words of our Lord while here on earth, to speak from this morning, for the profit and instruction of this congregation.

Here is a message delivered to Mary Magdalen, on Christ's discovery of himself to her after his resurrection. What affection does he shew to his disciples ! He would have them to know he looks on them as a brother does : " Go to my brethren," says he. He has the spirit of a brother towards them. He is just going to his Father and his God, to take possession of the inheritance, in their name and his own ; assuring them of the reality of their being owned by the Father as *their* Father and *their* God, as much as he himself was so owned : for that he had purchased the inheritance of heaven for them with his own blood. He had now finished the work of redemption ; and also proved that he had finished it for them, by his resurrection. He, the eldest Brother, and the First-born from the dead, was going to take actual possession first ; and, as he had told them before, to prepare a place for them. There are many mansions in the Father's house : the disciples were " heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ ;" and after a course of afflictive discipline, they were to be taken up to reign with Him, and " return to Zion with songs, and with everlasting joy upon their heads : " they

should obtain "joy and gladness, and mourning and sorrow should flee away."

Such is the nature of that comfortable message which the gracious Shepherd of Israel sent to his eleven disciples, at that time mourning and disconsolate. From St. Mark's account of their dejection, unbelief, and hardness of heart at this season, we have no great reason to believe that it conveyed to them at present any considerable consolation; whereas, if the message had been received with faith and thankfulness, what could be conceived so delightful? Poor miserable worms of the earth, covered with guilt and corruption, to be told of a relationship to God the Father, as their Father; and to God the Son, as their Brother! To be well assured that this relationship was real and substantial, and should have all the properties of the like relationship among men; that, after a little longer course of suffering here, they should as certainly be translated into the inheritance of heaven, and blessed with the eternal enjoyment of the love of God, as Jesus himself was about to be; and that in the mean time they were the happy objects of his care, and as safe in the arms of his providence

and grace as if they were already arrived at their home, since the same love wherewith the Father loves his Son should be in them, and he in them. Blessed disciples indeed ! But (as I have said) they do not seem at this time at all to have been in a frame of mind capable of receiving the consolations of this blessedness. Yet children of God's love they certainly were, amidst all their dejection and darkness ; and so, I trust, now, and have been in all ages, not a few of our fellow-creatures, the children of men : I mean those who have fled for refuge to Jesus as their only hope, and have shewn, by their sound Christian fruits, that he is their only hope, and that they are entitled (on true scriptural grounds) to be denominated heirs of the promises.

Now it may happen, in every congregation of professing Christians, that there may be some very sound characters, who are so far in the situation of the eleven disciples that they also derive no considerable comfort from reflecting on such a passage as this, where Christ condescends to call his true followers *brethren*, and to tell them that his Father is *their* Father, and his *God* their God. Moreover, this may easily happen, and often does

happen, from infirmity, and darkness of mind, and Satan's temptation; so that Christians who have a full right to the privilege of adopted children of God—the privilege of calling on Jesus as their Elder Brother—dare not avail themselves of so unspeakable a benefit. Then, again, there are others, who have no manner of right to these appellations, and yet are very forward to take to themselves the peace and consolation which do not belong to their character. Neither of these opposite cases, my brethren, originates in mere imagination: they are both founded in facts; in facts, too, which have existed in all ages since the first propagation of the Gospel;—that is, there have constantly been humble, doubting Christians, who smite on their breasts and call for mercy; and again, on the other hand, forward Pharisees, who without warrant claim a right to merit and distinction.

This consideration suggests the great utility there may be in examining this subject in a plain, scriptural way: and let no man tell me, that, in calling good men children of God, I use cant terms, or mystical, unintelligible terms; rather, let any one so disposed be ashamed to have for-

gotten that even in his Catechism he owns that at baptism he “ was made a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.”

The subject before us is doubtless important ; and may it please Almighty God so to direct my mind, that I may handle it to good purpose !

In substance, then, it is briefly this : What are the genuine marks by which a person may rationally be authorised to take comfort to himself, under all temptations, in the humble confidence that he preserves the character of “ a child of God,” and may look up without presumption to his Heavenly Father, and to his Elder Brother and great Fore-runner, Jesus Christ, in heaven ?

I scarcely need premise, that the advantages to be derived from a successful management of this inquiry will be two-fold : first, as supplying consolation to the faithful and sincere ; secondly, as withholding encouragement from those whose cases do not admit of encouragement, but require a very different treatment. The most precious remedies become poisons, when circumstances are changed. To a downcast, disquieted, humble soul, afraid of sin, disliking the ways of the world, and panting after holiness, I preach the blessings of the Gospel,

—a crucified Saviour, and the forgiveness of sins—and the man will soon break out in songs of deliverance. Whereas, by the very same process, either with a careless open sinner, or with the Pharisee, I should harden the heart still more, and still more blind the eyes. To his mind, the *holiness*, the *extensiveness*, the *terrors* of the law of God, must be explained; and the man must be convicted in the guilt of those depths of sin which he seems not as yet in the smallest degree aware of. Like the Jews of old, he is either totally negligent, or he is going about to establish his own righteousness, and does not submit to the righteousness of God; or, lastly, he is of an Antinomian stamp. This character must be dissected and exposed, in order that he may be convicted; may repent in dust and ashes, and cry out, Unclean, unclean!—The man, however, is not incurable. God forbid! The Gospel of Christ is the true medicine for every case; but we spoil all the work, if we mistake and confound those true marks and indications which distinguish one class of men from another. It may be hard to say whether I do more harm by preaching “Peace, peace!” to a mere nominal Christian, to a wicked worldling, who has obtained

no saving interest in the Redeemer's merits ; or by denying to a sincere believer and honest follower of Christ that consolation and rest to his conscience which the Scriptures hold forth to such characters. In both cases I should act very ignorantly, and very unfaithfully. The true servant of Christ has a right to look up to the Father of Jesus as his Father, and to Jesus himself as his own Elder Brother : and if this be so, why is not the man to be told so in so many plain words ? But in regard to one who by sin is daily crucifying his Saviour afresh, there can be neither truth nor propriety in applying the same language to him : he must in the first place deeply repent in dust and ashes, and, by prayer and application for mercy at the Throne of Grace, through Christ, must have acquired ground to believe that he has an appropriate interest in the merits of the Redeemer.

“ But have not all men (it will be asked) an interest in the death and sufferings of the Son of God ? Has any particular person a ground for higher pretensions in this matter than another ? Are we not all sinners, and therefore all on a perfect level in this respect ? ” Such questions, I acknowledge, are quite pertinent to this inquiry ;

and the answers which they call forth will very much elucidate the subject before us.

It is very true, and be it ever remembered with unfeigned and universal gratitude, that Christ is the propitiation "for the sins of the whole world." So far, every human creature that treads this globe may be said to have an important interest in the death and sufferings of Christ. Indeed, so very important is this truth, that it is the very first consideration that gives any good ground for hopes of pardon to a guilty sinner, and affords ease to his burdened soul. Here he fixes his foot; and though surrounded with fears and misgivings, doubts and uncertainties, with guilt and danger, still he may bid defiance to despair:—"Christ died for all sinners, without a single exception: I am a sinner: who is he that condemneth? The gate is strait, I do believe; but no one shall tell me it is not open." Such is the poor penitent's argument—and, God be praised! it is a perfectly sound argument—and here his interest in Jesus Christ is so far effectually established. I say, *so far*, because it is the very term, *so far*, which precisely suits the case. For here we are most carefully to distinguish, and remember that this

is by no means that interest in Christ which enables the sinner to cry “Abba, Father,” in the true spirit of adoption : this is not that interest in Christ which a sanctified, penitent servant of God has obtained, who looks up to God, through the power of the Holy Spirit enabling him to put his whole trust in him, as a reconciled God and Father in Christ Jesus, who has purchased for him this spiritual son-ship, and is not ashamed himself to call him brother.

Once more : This general, or rather universal, interest in the Redeemer, of which I have been speaking, important as it is, is no more than what the greatest (and I may add, the most impenitent) sinner alive may have. Nay, he actually has it, whether he ever chooses to make use of it or not : and, on the dreadful supposition that he dies impenitent, it will be at the last day his greatest condemnation, that he did not, while alive, make use of this interest ; that he did not come to the light, while it was in his power to do so, but loved darkness rather than light, in consequence of his deeds being evil.

There is, therefore, something further to be acquired beyond this *general universal interest* in

Christ Jesus ; something to be done by which an *appropriate* interest may be established between the Saviour and the sinner ; something on which may be grounded the aforesaid relationship, of Father and son, between Almighty God as a Father, and the penitent sinner as one of his children ; between Christ Jesus the Elder Brother, and the penitent sinner as brother and joint-heir with Christ his Lord. In other words, that general interest which all mankind have in the salvation and redemption by Jesus, must be carried into effect by every man for himself, in each particular case, in order that Christ may not have shed his blood in vain. And it is with this distinction in view that I now proceed to explain some of the methods which a sincere inquirer ought to employ that he may, in some measure at least, be able by self-examination to decide this great question, Whether hitherto Christ has died in vain for him, or whether he is in a likely way to be really and ultimately a partaker of the benefits of the Gospel.

And my first observation is this : If you have hitherto given yourself little or no concern respecting the salvation of Christ ; if you have hitherto

lived entirely for yourself and selfish gratifications, for the world and worldly concerns; you can at present have no pretensions whatever to apply the matter of my text to your own case: you have no pretensions to call God your Father, or Christ your Brother. Your case is the same, at present, as if Christ had never died for sinners—with this sole difference, that as yet it is not too late: as yet the Saviour stands at the door and knocks, though you have not deigned to open to him. Trifle not an hour longer—the night cometh, when no man can work!

But several may hope that their situation is not so bad as this.—Brethren, I would gladly hope so too; and the way to know, is, by close and impartial examination.

If the relationship of father and son be actually established between you and God, and of brethren between you and Jesus Christ, then have you yourselves *chosen* God to be your Father, and you *have come* to him in the gospel new and living way, through Christ, the blessed Peace-maker.—Distinctly remember, that we are not now speaking of God as our Father merely in that general way in which, as the Creator of all mankind, he is

looked on as the universal Parent of all created beings, though this representation be a very true one, and has also its important uses. We are speaking of the scriptural sense and way in which sinners, alienated from God by wicked works, are allowed to return to God in the spirit of love and affection, without servile fear and bondage. There may be many different degrees of this spirit of adoption; and it may be much clouded in many instances by Satan's temptation, and various infirmities; but, still, if it exist at all, it must be known, in part at least, to a man's own mind; and even if the light of it be only glimmering, and, as it were, almost extinct, this very circumstance will be known by every true servant of God—known and lamented—and the man will not rest till, by living habitually as in the presence of God, his Heavenly Father is pleased to shine upon his benighted soul with brighter beams of consolation.

Take notice: It is very true that the Christian may fall into sin—may rise, and fall again, and again rise, many times in the course of his Christian experience—but then, the history of these rises and falls cannot fail to be well known to him: it cannot be that the man should have had

no experience of such dealings with his Heavenly Father.

Further. In fact our inquiry amounts to this, Whether a man has any good reason to conclude that he has taken upon himself his baptismal promises, and is living as an obedient child of God; or is relying merely on the outward and visible sign. Now I say, be it doubtful respecting *God's* dealings with the man; be it doubtful whether *God* actually shines into his heart or not; it can never be doubtful to the man's own heart how he himself has conducted himself towards God, as his reconciled Father in Christ Jesus: the man can have no doubt whether he feels grateful to his Father for sending his Son to save him; whether he honours him as a Father in his intercourse with mankind; whether he shews a reverence to him in all that he does, and says, and thinks.— Here is plenty of materials for self-examination; nor is it possible that the issue of such an examination should be ambiguous. You may own, very probably, that you have been a blamable, disobedient son; but if you are really conscious of loving your Heavenly Father, of heartily approving of his way of saving you from eternal

misery, of having closed in with his precious promises, and of committing yourself to his care to direct and sanctify you, you cannot be ignorant of all this. No: in fact you must review all this secretly with hope and comfort, and must have a tale to tell to others, or at least to your own conscience, of God's goodness to you: then also you must love those that fear his holy Name, and you must be anxious to improve and grow in grace towards the perfect man in Christ Jesus. All this is perfectly consistent with many failings and infirmities, as long as you sincerely lament them and fight the good fight to overcome them—nor shall these ever prevent you from calling God your Father, or Jesus Christ your Brother;—but it is not consistent with habits of sin: sin must not have dominion over you.

All this, my brethren, proceeds on the strictly scriptural idea, that, as a tender relationship subsists in this world between earthly fathers and their children, so there actually subsists a spiritual union and fellowship between a reconciled God and his adopted children, who are holding communion with him, and walking before him in a holy faith and fear. The Father does not keep his children at a dis-

tance from him, as if they were bondsmen and slaves ; but they are accustomed to hear his paternal and affectionate voice, and to hearken to it, and run to him with filial endearments : “ My sheep,” says our Lord, “ hear my voice.” Hear what St. John says ; “ That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us ; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” Now, if indeed we have seen and tasted this fellowship, it cannot but have appeared all-precious to us, and all-momentous. In God the Father we have seen and apprehended the love of a Father towards us ; in God the Son, the love of a Brother, who has ascended into heaven, and is at the right hand of the Father in our name, interceding for us, taking care of our interests, preparing mansions for us, and waiting for us to be partakers and joint-heirs with himself of the eternal inheritance.

Here the point to be insisted on is, not whether we have attained these dispositions in the very highest degree in which they are to be attained, but whether we have at all tasted that the Lord is gracious, and are longing for larger manifesta-

tions of his goodness, and looking forward to the full enjoyment of God and his Christ to complete and to crown our felicity. If we know nothing at all of these things, and are perfectly easy about them, we may depend upon it that at present we have no lot in this matter : and though I well know that many will say, “ this is a severe conclusion, and may drive men to despair,” I maintain that this is the kindest preaching in the world : for whether is it kinder to use deceit, and say, “ You already are in possession of the greatest possible treasure, and need have no anxiety about it ;” or, “ You have not yet found the Pearl of great price, but I tell you where it is to be found, and the manner in which you are to search for it ?”

But there are other marks of the relationship between God as your Father, and his Son as your Brother.—For example :

1. This same relationship extends to all the fellow-members of Christ’s body, the church of God. If God is your Father and Christ your Brother, your hearts will infallibly be drawn out to sympathize and hold communion with all the true servants of God, all your fellow-members here on earth, “ the household of faith ;” and to

look forward with delight to the time when you shall hold communion with the whole eternal society of “the spirits of just men made perfect.”

2. I will briefly mention two other marks of this state of endearing communion with God and his Christ. The first respects the understanding: If these things be so, you see the excellency of the righteousness of Christ Jesus, the beauty of his holy character, and the utter unprofitableness and want of merit of any doings of your own. Then you build for eternity on the righteousness of Christ; you renounce for ever, as a foundation of hope, your own righteousness. Thus your understanding is enlightened.—The other mark subsists in the affections: Your heart is with the Father and the Son; heavenly things to you have such superior charms, that this earth, with all its comforts, pleasures, pomps, and vanities, is in comparison insipid and unsatisfying. Your conversation is in heaven: your affections, as the Apostle advises them to be, are set “on things above.”

And here, brethren, I will venture to conclude, with some confidence, that there is no person, of plain, ordinary intellect, who will read his Bible with

care and candour, and without any regard to the puzzles of controversy, but will be convinced that this representation is not *over*-stated, but is perfectly in harmony with the whole tenor of Scripture. I grant he may be ready enough to cry out, "If these be indeed the marks of God being our Father, in the sense of the text; of Christ being our Brother, in the same sense; how few must there be of those who can pretend to number themselves with the blessed eleven disciples, to whose Heavenly Father Jesus Christ their Brother ascended into heaven! Surely it cannot be, that *so few* are entitled to a heavenly inheritance as this reasoning leads us to conclude."

Thus, because there are but few who, according to these ideas, appear in their conduct to exemplify the true Christian character, you would conclude there must be mistatement or misunderstanding somewhere in this matter. Yet ye cannot forget that this very question was put to our Lord: "Lord, are there few that be saved?" and he answered, The gate is strait that leads to life, and few go in thereat.—I leave it with you to consider who has the advantage in this argument.

But, brethren, it is my most earnest and fervent

wish and prayer, that any endeavours of mine may tend to increase the number of those who are treading the narrow path, and hastening to the strait gate. Certainly, however, I shall not succeed by representing the connection between a reconciled God and a penitent sinner as consistent with a cold, dead, barren belief and apprehension of the Gospel, where there is no filial affection to the Father, and no brotherly affection to the Son, and no sense of your need of the presence of the Spirit of Christ as your Comforter, to abide with you, dwell in you, instruct your understandings, and incline your hearts. For be assured, brethren, that nothing short of this blessed communion with the adorable Persons of the Eternal Trinity can prove an effective medicine for all the troubles and diseases of a true servant of God, in his passage through this dreary scene. It is this that raises the downcast eye, and fixes it on heavenly things. It is this only which sweetens worldly crosses, humbles a man under afflictive dispensations, supports him in all trials with patience and resignation, and inspires him with the hope of being inconceivably happy in heaven. Lastly, it is this alone which can subdue the tyranny of all bad passions,

and undue earthly attachments. For example : Covetousness, and worldly-mindedness, how are these reprobated in Scripture ! indeed, they are the common bane of Christian profession : now it is the love of God only that can deaden or expel all such groveling desires, when it reigns in the heart and fills the soul with better things.

To conclude, with a brief application to different characters.—

To the humble, seeking soul, convinced of the unsatisfactory nature of all worldly enjoyments, weary with the pursuit of them, disgusted with their insipidity, and uneasy under the guilt which often accompanies them, I say, that I entirely miss my aim if such persons do not find comfort and encouragement in every word I have said. To you the Gospel of Christ is a specific, if you use it aright. The promises of my text are applicable to your case. You have a Father, and also an Elder Brother who has ascended into heaven. You are ranked among the heirs of God's promises, and He is willing to shew the immutability of his counsel. Hold fast the anchor of hope sure and stedfast. You willingly own the guilt of your sins ; you feel there is no health

in you : if such characters have not a right to lay hold of the strong consolations of the Gospel, I am at a loss to know who has the right. Listen, then, to the Saviour's invitations : he " will give you rest." Listen to the Apostle's entreaties : " We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us : we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Therefore avoid sin of every kind : turn from evil ways : close with the Saviour ; and be happy in leading a righteous, godly, and sober life.

And now, would to God that the characters of all who hear me might authorise me to hold forth the same encouragement ! But you must know very well, that I am forbid to do so, when men in their lives display nothing of the new creature in Christ Jesus. St. Paul tells you over and over, that " neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but a new creature." How can God be the Heavenly Father, how can Christ be the Elder Brother, of those who now prefer the society of any beings whatever, rather than of those who in their conduct exemplify the new creature in Christ Jesus ? Does this earth and its possessions, or do the promises of the next world, engross your

affections? Is it difficult to see which of the two employ more of your thoughts and attention? Are you often drawn out in hearty affection to plead the cause of God and his Christ? You certainly would be so drawn out, at some time or other, if the one was your Father and the other your Brother : certainly you would, on some occasion, discover filial and brotherly affections.—Does all this seem to you obscure, mystical, unintelligible, or over-stated? If so, your case is not the more promising on that account. Let us make trial of this matter in another way. You well know the scriptural account is, that there are but two sorts of persons in the world, however numerous may be the classes into which we may be disposed to divide them,—the righteous and the wicked ; they that serve God, and they that serve him not : or again, in other words, those who have passed from death unto life by faith in Christ Jesus, and are made partakers of a Divine nature ; and those who still remain dead in trespasses and sins. Now, to come still closer to the point, do you shun the former sort of persons as you would shun a contagion ; or do you really love them ?—love to pray with them, to strengthen

the common cause of righteousness against the *enemies* of righteousness ; do you love to converse with them about your common Father, and your common Brother, and your common heavenly inheritance, according to my text ?——Do I hear some persons say, “ We pray alone, we meditate alone on religious subjects ? ” I rejoice to hear that you do so : be it so : and I would hope that you do so earnestly, warmly, steadily, and constantly ; and not for form-sake, or merely to quiet an uneasy conscience. I hope you have a real delight in performing the duty, and that you do not make it a cold, lifeless lip-service. But still, if you were more hearty in the cause of God’s honour, and of Christ’s honour ; nay, were you more hearty in your own cause ; I am convinced the business would employ more of your time and your zeal. I have just said it is a common cause ; and where men have a common cause at stake, it might seem strange that they should not unite in support of it with all their wisdom, fervour, and activity. You enjoy conversation concerning the gains and profits of commerce, concerning the business and connections of the world, concerning pleasures and amusements, even in many instances

where you are not directly or immediately concerned : what, then, is religion the only concern on which, in the ordinary intercourse of mankind, not one word is ever to be uttered, without the suspicion of enthusiasm, or even hypocrisy, attaching to the practice ?

Further : My beloved brethren, if you mean to examine yourselves to good purpose, let no one by plausible insinuations deaden in your minds the good impressions which an inquiry of this sort is apt to produce. You may be told that your religious instructor carries things *too far* : it will be your wisdom to inquire whether ye yourselves carry things *far enough*. The grand point which I would gladly arrive at is, that religion should become an habitual, practical thing ; and this not in form only, but in power ;—that every faculty you have may be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ ;—that in all your thoughts and words and actions there may be a religious concern and seriousness ;—that you may not take up even your Bible merely from a sense that you ought to read a chapter in it frequently, but because you are charmed with a sense of spiritual things, and because it is your greatest delight to

retire from the vanities of life, and even from its innocent employments, to cultivate a secret intercourse with your Heavenly Father, and with your Brother Jesus, who is ascended to heaven, and entered as your Forerunner within the veil.

A word more, for the purpose of preventing misapprehension. — Double-minded men in religion are very common characters. It is not every one who has no sincere and hearty enjoyment in religion, that runs uniformly with greediness after sin. There are many who have no fixed, determined plan of conduct; no one great end in view; and hence every blast of temptation carries them aside. “A double-minded man,” says St. James, “is unstable in all his ways.” Often they may secretly acknowledge they are going on amiss; and they are hoping, day after day, that they will live better; and this is to take place when such and such difficulties are removed: and in this way, when natural conscience is in a degree stirred up and become troublesome, they bribe it to be still and easy, by vain and fruitless promises of amendment.

Again: Sometimes, under a discourse from the pulpit, they are impressed with a comfortable and

alluring view of religious practice. At other times, the discourse quite alarms and terrifies them: It will not, say they, do for me to proceed further in this course: I must reform: I am unhappy in this world, and in the next I shall be miserable for ever, if I die in my present condition. Again: In some instances, afflictions, family losses of near and dear relatives, become the cause of a *transient* seriousness—yes, transient seriousness—for it is no more than transient. All this time the heart is entangled with one or another idol. I cannot tell you who or what the idol is; for there are many gods and many lords that have dominion over men. All I can with certainty say, is, It is not the God of the Scriptures, it is not the God of Israel, that such men worship. It may be Baal, or some other false god of equal efficacy, between whom and the true God men are halting in their judgment as to whom they shall follow, and this, sometimes for a long time together.

Now if these observations, by the blessing of God, touch the conscience of any one present, my prayer is, that conscience may do its office to the salvation of the soul; that conscience may stir up the mind to inquire what the idol is, which

prevents the owner of this conscience from obeying his own good sense and reason, as well as the kind motions of the Spirit of God. Perhaps you would have real delight in religion, but there are certain persons, whose esteem you would not lose, who will infallibly be displeased with you : Perhaps you are at present oppressed with worldly business which must not be neglected ; and by and by, when your affairs are settled, you hope to begin to attend to the concerns of your soul : Or again ; Perhaps you have some favourite passion, which must be indulged and gratified at present—you cannot part with it. You may abstain from guilty indulgences for a time, but your patience is worn out ; and in proportion as you have pacified conscience a little, the violence of its accusation abates ; and then your fears abate also, and the deceitfulness of false pleasures again overcomes your resolutions. Thus you go on, sinning and reforming, and sinning again—then fresh qualms of conscience rouse your religious paroxysms ; you mix with good people and attend the means of grace, and you are soon puffed up with your supposed admirable progress—and again soon thrown off your guard by hearkening to the

solicitations of your old passions for sensual or worldly pleasures. It is in the indulgence of these that your real inclinations are placed, your real enjoyments consist; and not in the least in the pure, spiritual delights of communion and fellowship with God as your Heavenly Father, or with Christ as your Elder Brother. Yet you must pay some formal attention to outward duties at least, else qualms of conscience will soon return, and become very restless and troublesome. Conscience, therefore, must be bribed from time to time. Perhaps, on some occasions, you run the full length of fashionable sins: then the pleasures themselves become tiresome, and remorse seizes your mind, harassed with guilty reflections, at a time when perhaps your health totters, and your bodily frame is exhausted by the repetition of wicked indulgences. Once more: When in a very low frame both of body and mind, this poor unstable mortal becomes religious again—and again runs over his double course of sin and reformation.—Wretched man! how long wilt thou halt between the two; how long wilt thou waver? Reflect on thy situation: The truly godly scarcely dare associate with thee, for by thy bad conduct thou bringest

disgrace on the best of causes ; and men who are altogether of a wicked stamp do not esteem thee.

Christian brethren, there are few cases which lay open more thoroughly the vanity and inefficacy of mere human resolutions, than these which I have been now describing. They are not cases of downright hypocrisy, in the gross sense of the term ; there exists in them a degree of sincerity : and there exists also a contention between a sense of guilt and the violence of strong passions : and this strange compound is agitated with a belief of another world, and the fear of condemnation at the day of judgment. The several ingredients in this depraved compound prevail alternately, and produce the above-mentioned woful rounds of wicked indulgence and temporary repentance.

Maladies of this sort are both awful and very common. But it has not been my intention to describe the distemper without pointing out the remedy. Recourse must be had to the great Physician of souls, and that instantly. In the right application of the Gospel consists the cure. The system of mere resolving and intending to amend, in a man's own strength, has been sufficiently

tried, and constantly found unequal to the task of producing a thorough and lasting change. The understanding is convinced of guilt in such cases, but the heart is unchanged.—That I may not leave the matter ambiguous, I find it necessary to say plainly that such cases are constantly misunderstood : such men usually think that they know enough already ; that they have faith enough in Christ ; and that they want only stronger resolutions and more vigorous endeavours. Thus they would produce good fruit on a corrupt tree, directly contrary to the Saviour's declaration, who tells us that the tree must first be made good, and then the fruit will infallibly follow. Now this is the very snare in which they are entangled, together with thousands and ten thousands of the same class. The living faith of the Gospel, by which a man is justified and the world is overcome, is spiritual in its very nature : for our own Homily, as well as Scripture itself, tells us, that “ it is the gift of God,” and is wrought by his Spirit ; and that it never fails to influence the affections and regulate the practice.

To conclude. Brethren, nothing would be easier than for me to preach smooth things,—

things much less offensive to the supposed dignity of our nature, and much more agreeable to our ordinary feelings and sentiments—and thereby I might infallibly ensure the praise both of good nature and good sense, and of candour and liberality. I might tell a very wicked man, that human passions were strong and unruly, and that he had had great merit in frequently restraining their excesses ; that God would not be “ extreme to mark what was done amiss ;” that, in the midst of all his vices, his good heart was sufficiently apparent. I might tell the greatest debauchee, who by his plausible artifices and pretences had ruined the peace of families and destroyed the honour and virtue of the innocent, that he was nevertheless a humane and charitable man, and that charity covered a multitude of sins. And thus I might proceed, telling the drunkard he was no gamester ; and the gamester, that he had never been intoxicated : and so might I acquire fame for moderation and liberality, and for my treatment of troubled consciences, and for supplying them with passports for eternity. I might certainly do all this ; and as certainly there would follow from my congregations the approbation of which I

speak ;—but there would remain one question, which would solicit a reply, and hang heavy on my conscience ; namely, How should I dare to face this attentive audience at the Last Day ? In that awful day, as surely as you and I shall then meet, you will either meet me with joy, or with a sad wish that you had listened to the advice of this day.—How often are we to repeat, that, after all, though not saved by works, religion is a work, and the greatest work you can undertake ? You must work with every faculty you possess. How often am I to point out, that the great secret consists in working in a right way ? There cannot possibly be too much exertion, provided men do but work on Gospel principles, and in the true Gospel order and connection. The misfortune is, many are disposed to believe that mere human exertions are abundantly sufficient for all that is wanted : and, what is still worse, the true Gospel method of calling forth those exertions, and rendering them effective, is almost forgotten ; or, if remembered and admitted, is still kept too much out of sight, and, as it were, in the back ground. The great object of this discourse has been, that every one who has heard me

may, by steady and incessant exertion of his faculties, directed in the Gospel way of application to the Saviour of mankind—to Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life—attain, through the blessing of God, to the glorious and happy condition of the disciples recorded in my text, of looking up to God as his Father, and Jesus Christ as his Brother.

Brethren, it is a great and most important truth, that all men, without exception, continue to have light notions of sin till their hearts have become duly affected with a sense of the immense value of the atoning blood of Christ. It is a spiritual view of the exceeding great love of Christ in shedding his precious blood, which melts the heart in deep humility, contrition, and love to God. Where there is a want of this spiritual view, there can be no considerable abhorrence of sin, nor any lively faith in the Redeemer. In fact, such characters have not a just view of the true nature of the Gospel. Greatly defective in Christian practice, they are, if possible, yet more defective in Christian principles; and they never fail to shew their ignorance, when on any occasion they happen to be a little alarmed respecting their spiritual condition. Then they shew that they harbour not the least

suspicion of their ignorance of the extent of the law of God, or of their deficiency in the faith of the Gospel.

Brethren, I know not whether, in the whole concern of practical religion, there be any one mistake so extremely common, and so generally mischievous, as that which I am now endeavouring to lay open. Men fancy they know enough, and have faith enough ; but that they do not *do* enough, that they are only deficient in practice : they know the road to life, but do not walk in it : they know how to amend, but have not resolution enough to amend. They say they believe in the Saviour, but they dare not make use of him till they have amended their lives, till they have made themselves better : after they have made themselves better, then they may venture to apply to Jesus to make up their deficiencies. This I know to be the settled, the abiding sentiment and belief of thousands. The effect of such a sentiment is precisely what might be expected : such men go on in the same course ; they seldom amend at all : or if, in some cases, when the violence of juvenile and turbulent passions has ceased, they do perhaps amend some parts of their external conduct, and leave off some

branches of their vicious courses, then they commence proud Pharisees, and expect the benefits of the Gospel, not in the character of lost sinners, or of humble contrite penitents, but as a due reward for their virtuous amendment.

I wish it were in my power to exhibit this most destructive system of religion in the frightful characters in which it deserves to be exhibited, that it might deter poor sinners from falling into the snare. It entangles, it destroys its thousands and ten thousands. This plan, my brethren, is not applying to Jesus, as the Physician of souls, to cure an inveterate malady, absolutely incurable in any other way; it is representing the Redeemer, not as saving the lost, and purifying the sinner and rendering him zealous of good works, but as only discharging the relics of a debt which the man himself, by his virtues, is supposed to have almost discharged already. In short, it is treating sin with levity. In this plan there is not one word of the new creature in Christ Jesus, not one word of a faith that worketh by love, nor of any endearing relationship with Christ.

To conclude. A sound penitent places all his hopes of amendment on the help he is to receive

from communion with his Saviour. Weary and heavy laden, he flies to Christ, not only to pardon him for the past, but to enable him to amend for the future. This is the grand distinction, the turning point in the religion of the Gospel. It is this which ensures a practical obedience, lowers the pride of human nature, but exalts and glorifies the Redeemer. Look, then, my brethren, well to yourselves. It is the preacher's duty to lay before his hearers, on the one hand, the dreadful consequences of sin; and, on the other, the blessings of conversion of heart through the Gospel: it is the hearers business to profit by a faithful and earnest exposition of evangelical truth: and I know nothing so likely to make both preachers and hearers perform their distinct duties as they ought to do, as the keeping steadily in mind how we shall both most assuredly be affected at the last day. Dreadful must it be for the preacher to be then charged with having been unfaithful to his flock; and, again, insupportably afflicting for the flock to be accused of despising the honest admonitions of the preacher, of making a mock at sin, and of doing despite to the Blood of the Covenant.

May Almighty God, of his great mercy, be pleased, not only to give us a right judgment in all things, but also to incline our hearts, that we may continue in firm faith and uniform obedience to his Commandments even unto our life's end !

SERMON VII.

LUKE xvii. 5.

And the Apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

IN a country where the people in general profess themselves to be Christians, it is a very common thing to suppose that there can be no great deficiency of faith. The very name of Christian implies a number of articles of belief in which all are conceived to agree, if not exactly, yet nearly so. It may seem, therefore, surprising, that so much should be said, both in the Old and New Testament, concerning the importance and necessity of faith ; also, that so much should be said in disapprobation of the prevalency of a want of faith. Our Lord, in the very next verse to the text, tells his disciples that they had not faith so

much as a grain of mustard-seed ; and that this want of faith was the reason why their powers for the discharge of their ministry were so much contracted.

Whoever reads the Old Testament with any degree of attention, must be struck with the perpetual complaints of the sacred writers of the unbelief of mankind. How very little effect had the most signal miracles on the minds of the ancient world, and especially of the ancient Jews, with whose history we are so well acquainted ! The most unexceptionable appeals to their senses had very little effect in producing any permanent conviction. The plagues of Egypt ; the extraordinary deliverance of the Israelites ; the waters of the Red Sea standing on a heap on both sides, and the dry land left in the middle ; the returning of the waters upon their infatuated followers, Pharaoh, and his chariots and horses ; then the feeding of the people, day by day, both with bread and meat ; and their miraculous deliverances from the want of water to drink, and from the poisonous bites of the serpents—how very soon were all these gracious tokens of God's regard and compassion absolutely lost upon that hard-hearted

and stiff-necked generation ! Lastly, when they had obtained the promised land, and God had caused the wicked inhabitants to flee before them, like chaff before the wind, how very soon did they become faithless, and were again besotted with idolatry !

It cannot be without design that so much is said in our Bibles concerning unbelief. It is, no doubt, for the purpose of more effectually awakening our minds to a sense of this our *evil propensity* ; and I therefore think we are very well employed, when we look over our Bibles with an especial view to this point, and contemplate gravely the numerous instances there recorded of the sad effects of unbelief.

You observe, that it was through unbelief that sin made its very first entrance into the world. Our great female ancestor, Eve, did not believe the threatening, “ Ye shall die. In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt die.” How very easily did the serpent persuade her to break the solemn command of God ! She had no one thing to set against the express command of God, except the impudent representation of the serpent, that God had deceived the man and the woman ;

that He knew they would not die, but become wiser by eating of that fruit. And, what I think is very remarkable in this most important event, it took place while the minds of our first parents were in a state of innocence. *Then* it was that sin entered the world, and death by sin. It took place at a time when the general propensity was to good, and not after that propensity had changed and shewn its evil tendency. The sad event of breaking the only law of restraint which God had made, had the effect of *breaking up* the communion between the Creator and the creature. The holy Creator drove the miserable creature, as soon as he had sinned, out of the garden of Paradise. A holy God could no longer hold communion, no longer preserve harmony, with his disobedient creature.

Brethren, after much thinking, I find it impossible to explain distinctly how an innocent being, created with good propensities, should have been induced to forget the Lord his God, and eat the forbidden fruit; but I observe the important *fact*—the fact, too, so very material to my present subject—that the disobedience of Eve arose from *unbelief*. Eve did not believe that God would do

as he had threatened; she did not believe that the consequence of eating the fruit would instantly be a state of mortality and misery, the ruin of body and mind, and a separation from the friendship of Almighty God.

Further: What a dreadful state of obduracy and unbelief must all the antediluvian world have been in, some years before the Deluge! Noah was a preacher of righteousness: the patience of God was manifested for more than one hundred and twenty years, while the ark was building; yet it does not appear that a single person, besides Noah and his family, believed his prediction of the flood that was about to come: they ate and they drank, married and were given in marriage, till the day that Noah entered the ark;—and God, it is said, then shut the door of the ark; intimating, in terms sufficiently intelligible, that the day of grace was then past: and thus that wicked and hardened generation were all swept away, except eight persons—and this at one blow—in their impenitence and unbelief!

Brethren, read your Bibles with attention to this particular subject, and you will be astonished at the instances recorded in it of unbelief. To ge

through them, would be to transcribe a large portion of the Sacred Writings.

It was but a few weeks after the Israelites had come out of Egypt, that God was pleased to enter into a solemn covenant with them at Mount Sinai. You have the account, in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy, of the astonishing manifestations of the power, majesty, and holiness of God ; how they heard God's voice out of the midst of the fire at Mount Sinai. What was the effect ? It was not more than two or three months before that very people, under that very mountain, returned to their Egyptian idolatry, and were singing and dancing before a golden calf which they had set up to worship !

The succeeding history of the Jews is little more than a history of their rebellion and *unbelief*. In the time of king David, "the Lord looked down from heaven, to see if there were any that did understand and seek after God ; but they were all gone aside—all together become filthy—there was none that did good ; no, not one : " and this very passage of the Psalms is quoted by St. Paul, to prove the unbelief of the world, and their general corruption. The anger of Almighty God was

so kindled at length, that he utterly destroyed their city and their temple, and suffered them to be carried into captivity.

Still, God did not forget his favoured people. In his providence he raised up Cyrus, to destroy the princes and empire of Babylon, and to rebuild the Jewish temple. But again and again that wicked nation were plunged in corruptions; till at length they filled up the measure of their iniquity in rejecting the promised Messiah, and brought upon themselves fresh heavy judgments, which terminated in the destruction of their second temple, and their dispersion,—which continues to the present day, a memorable proof of God's indignation and vengeance on account of their unbelief and hardness of heart.

Now, to form a judgment of the infidelity and stupidity and wickedness of the heathen world, ye need only to read the first chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans—written, too, at a period when arts and sciences were at their height, when languages and philosophical knowledge were abounding among the polished nations: for, at the very time when St. Paul preached to the Athenians the true God, that elegant and learned people

formed the university to which the younger people resorted from every quarter to gain instruction ; and there it was that the spirit of our holy Apostle was stirred up within him, so that he could not bear to see the inhabitants “ wholly given to idolatry.”

Whoever reflects seriously on these things, must cease to wonder that a material part of the Old and New Testament should relate to the unbelief of mankind ; and that this unbelief should be *every where represented* as a prevalent and destructive malady. The history of the Jewish nation in particular, and of the Gentile world in general, justifies the representation.

Now, what a relief would it prove, to a truly religious mind, to find that a great and glorious change had taken place in the world since the promulgation of the Gospel of Light and Truth ! Thanks and praise to God’s holy Name ! the preaching of the Gospel has not been without effect ; the foolishness of preaching has actually saved some : but *STILL, STILL*, this same evil propensity to unbelief is the crying sin, as it ever has been, of the various nations, even where the light of the Gospel has shone.

Brethren, one of the great objects which in this discourse I have in view, is to convince you that there exists in the world, and even in what are called Christian countries, much more of unbelief than is generally apprehended.

The unbelief in ancient times shewed itself, both among the Jews and the Gentiles, in a wretched *propensity to idolatry* : men worshipped sensible objects—sun, moon, and stars, living animals, and even stocks and stones. In our Saviour's time, the spirit of unbelief, which is so much reprobated by our Lord himself and the succeeding evangelical writers, did not consist so much in ideas of a plurality of gods, as in wrong conceptions of the nature of the one God and Lord, JEHOVAH ; and still more in a perverse and prejudiced interpretation of the Bible. And, to bring the substance of this matter to one point, they were then, and continue to be, blind as to the spiritual meaning of the Bible and the law of God ; and their unbelief consisted, and still consists, in rejecting the real Messiah, who suffered at Jerusalem almost two thousand years ago, and in fancying another Messiah as yet to come, more adapted to their worldly-minded

conceptions. Here again, brethren, the very serious part of their mistake does not consist so much in the prejudice of resisting the evidence of Christ's having actually come, and suffered by wicked hands, as in their completely mistaken notion of the character of the Messiah himself. It is very true, that the two errors go together, and cannot possibly be separated; for the instant that a Jew is made to understand his own Bible, so as that he shall comprehend the humble, bleeding Messiah, with a spiritual kingdom, to be the Messiah of his Bible—instead of supposing a great prince and ruler, with much temporal splendour, to be intended—in that instant his prejudices against our blessed Redeemer will be done away, and he will bow at the Cross with vast relents, and say, “My Lord and my God!”

But, then, you cannot but observe how dreadfully mischievous this species of unbelief must be in its consequences; and to what little purpose it is that a man says, “he believes in the one only God,” so long as he denies his revelation; so long as he withstands his miracles; in a word, so long as he refuses to receive Him “whom the Father hath sent.”

Then, to apply all this to our own condition and circumstances : precisely of the same nature will be the sad consequence of our unbelief, if we also reject the Saviour in his true character. If we, either through prejudice, or wilful misapprehension, or careless indifference, or pride of heart, and want of humility and a due sense of unworthiness, refuse to have Him to reign over us, we shall be in no better condition than the stiff-necked Jews themselves, whom the Prophet describes as “ shutting their eyes and hardening their hearts, lest they should be converted and healed.” Weigh these matters well, and bring them close to your hearts — you will find, I say, abundantly more unbelief now, even now, at this present moment, among us called Christians, than many persons suppose, or are at all aware of.

In every age of the church of Christ there has been just reason to complain of unbelief. We may judge of the great strength of this infidel or sceptical principle, by noticing its pernicious effects even among those who are in the main better disposed than mere pharisees or worldlings, and who deserve, on the whole, the name of followers of Jesus. How very slow were the Apostles themselves, and

the other disciples of Christ, to apprehend rightly the character of their Lord, and to believe in him ! Jesus himself, after his resurrection, appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat ; and St. Mark tells us, that “ he upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.” And, immediately after expressing his dislike of their conduct in this instance, he told them to “ go and preach the Gospel to every creature ;” and added, “ He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.”

The case of St. Thomas is well known, and certainly affords a most striking and memorable instance of unbelief. And the rebuke which our Lord gave him on that account, deserves to be deeply impressed on all our minds. He intimates, that it was well that he HAD believed *upon seeing* Christ, and putting his fingers into the prints of the nails, but he does not say that he was blessed for that reason : No, he pronounces the blessing on those who believed “ though they had not seen” the same things ;—intimating most distinctly, that to resist a sufficient evidence, and such evidence as

God in his unerring judgment and compassionate providence thinks proper and expedient for us, is highly blamable, and incurs the danger of *losing* God's blessing.—The story of Thomas is very instructive indeed, and belongs particularly to the subject we are upon. I have no doubt but a modern proud sceptic, who should pretend to accurate reasoning and investigation in a philosophical spirit, as he would call it, puffed up with vanity, and blind in his ignorance, would greatly commend the caution and good sense of Thomas, who was determined not to be led by others, or by public rumour, but would judge for himself; and who withheld his assent till he had a fair opportunity of examining the several parts of the body of Christ, mutilated as they were by his crucifixion: “Unless,” said he, “I see these proofs, I will not believe.” But our blessed Lord did not judge in this manner: he says, “Blessed is he who has believed on *less* evidence; and such as thousands now, and as all in every future age, must be content with! God has granted you, Thomas, abundant evidence; nay, he has granted even this your unreasonable demand, of seeing and examining my hands, feet, and side: but beware

of feeding this spirit of unbelief: this is not the way to gain God's blessing: the blessing is to them who believe on reasonable evidence the testimony of others: they shew thereby a teachable, humble, candid spirit; and this is the temper which is peculiarly pleasing to Almighty God. No state of mind is more acceptable to Him, than the believing of the word of God—taking him simply at his word—and acting upon his promises even against hope; and hazarding all things, whatever may be the present appearances.

Take especial notice in reading the Scriptures, that those characters who are there recorded as most eminent for their faith, and for pleasing God, were men of the stamp which I here describe; men who gave implicit credit to God upon his testimony, and directed their practice accordingly. Think you that the case of righteous Noah, whom I have already mentioned, required not both a strong and an abiding confidence in the declarations of Almighty God, all the time that he was building the ark, for the considerable term of one hundred and twenty years? during which term he had, no doubt, to sustain the malignant satire and ridicule of that wicked generation among whom he lived.

The sun shone daily as usual ; the rain descended in moderation, and at proper seasons ; the fruits of the earth were plentiful ; and men and women married, built houses, increased their possessions from year to year. Think you not, that an ordinary faith and confidence in God's threatenings would not have been shaken under such extraordinary circumstances ; and the rather, as it does not appear that he had one single friend or companion, except his own family, to strengthen him in his holy resolutions to withstand the insolent raillery and mocking of the wicked that surrounded him ? It is worth while to reflect on the courage and vigour of the mind of Noah. I confess I have often been astonished at his perseverance. Consider the labour and the expense of contriving and finishing a vessel of such magnitude as the ark, and intended for such purposes as are related. What a prodigious number of tools, implements, and materials, and of workmen ! and not one of these last at all hearty in the work, working merely for hire, and probably deriding their employer, and never expecting to see the ark swim on the waters. Well may faith be called the " gift of God ;" for nothing short of a Divine influence

could possibly have supported the mind of Noah during the one hundred and twenty years while the ark was building.——The histories in the Bible are concise, but they often contain a world of instruction.

It is the less necessary to insist on the case of Abraham, because he is constantly represented as a true sample of the most faithful of men. In his case the nature of genuine faith is most eminently exemplified. He believed in God against hope. He staggered not at the promise, but was strong in faith. And when himself and his wife Sarah, according to the promise, had been blessed with a child in their old age, contrary to the course of nature, he appeared ready, and without the smallest delay or hesitation, to sacrifice his son at the command of God. To all appearance such a step would frustrate all his hopes and expectations from the promise, that “in his Seed all the nations of the earth were to be blessed.” Abraham, however, like a true believer, was not to be daunted by the appearances. He had no anxiety about the consequences: his business was to believe and to obey; the event rested with God, whose promises were unchangeable, and whose sovereign

will was not to be resisted. It was the stedfast faith and dependence of Abraham which called forth those extraordinary scripture-eulogiums on his character—namely, that he was “the friend of God;” that he would “command his children and his household after him, that they should keep the way of the Lord, and do justice and judgment;” and that he should be esteemed in all ages of the church the “father of the faithful.”

It would be beside the purport of this discourse to multiply instances of the various servants of God who are recorded in sacred and ecclesiastical history as eminent for their faith: but it may have its uses to leave on your minds this striking and instructive consideration, that even in the best of times the characters of this stamp are but thinly dispersed; and, consequently, that a true faith in God has ever been a rare thing; for, if faithful men had abounded in the world, they would not have been marked and honoured with such peculiar distinctions. It is their *paucity* that has rendered them so conspicuous; it is the rarity of their excellence that makes them so much the objects of praise and imitation.

It will be said, perhaps—it often is said—that

“in Christian countries now, where the religion of Jesus is established, the case is become widely different. All men are brought up in the faith of the Gospel; faith is no longer a rare thing in such countries. The will of God is every where now understood, and expressed in his revealed commandments; so is the nature of Christ’s redemption. Little more need be said concerning faith: there may be a few infidels or sceptics, but they are not numerous: all that can now be required is, that men should work out their own salvation with care and diligence, by abounding in all manner of good works.”

The grievous error and fallacy of this sort of representation it has been my business to expose from this pulpit on many occasions, and by placing this interesting subject in various lights. At present, it will fall in with the spirit of my text, in which the Apostles pray the Lord that he would increase their faith, to confine myself, in what remains to be said, to the consideration of our *present* circumstances in the great point before us. Do we, who are now alive, and enjoy the precious privileges of religious freedom, and who seem to be settled in our notions of the theory

of religion—do we, or do we not, stand in need of an increase of faith?

Here, my brethren, is an inquiry presented to your minds which will well deserve all the attention we can give it. The preceding part of this discourse will surely have paved the way sufficiently to excite a suspicion in your minds that you yourselves may possibly stand in need of an increase of faith. The Apostles were with their Lord every day; they saw his miracles every day; and every day they were working miracles, more or less, themselves: yet, perfectly sensible were they that they stood in need of an increase of faith. And they seem, moreover, to have been impressed with the idea that they were to obtain the increase they wanted by prayer; and that it was the gift of God: “Lord,” say they, “increase our faith.”

Permit me, then, to suggest to your minds a few reflections, which may help to convince you that your faith stands very much in need of increase.

1. It is the very nature of faith to render things that are out of sight active and operative, as if they were really present. “Faith is the evidence,” says the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews,

“ of things not seen.” You believe that there is a God ; that he actually hears and sees you, and is present : now, is there any one of us here who will pretend that his temper and disposition of mind is at all answerable to *such* a belief? If we really believed God to be present in this place where we are now assembled, I say it is absolutely impossible that our prayers to him should be so cold and unfeeling, our praises of him so feeble and indifferent. I say, that the consideration of God’s being seen among us by the clear and strong eye of faith, would put down every irreverent look, posture, and action ; would restrain every improper, unholy, wandering thought ; and, during the time that this faith was in exercise, it would assuredly stifle every corrupt affection.

2. You firmly believe that Almighty God knows all things ; and you fully believe you must appear at his judgment-seat.

Here again I observe, that if your faith was as strong as your expressions imply, your conviction of sin would be more deep and abiding than any one of us can pretend it to be. If God knows all things, then he knows ten thousand thousand sins which you have forgotten : yet who is there among us,

who, if he would take the salutary pains, could not make out a sad catalogue against himself? Yet how different, how defective, would be his catalogue, compared with the unerring pages of Him who omits nothing in that awful book which is to be opened at the last day! Surely, brethren, if our belief in God's knowledge of the human heart, and of his perfect remembrance of every event, amounted to an efficacious persuasion in this matter, it could not fail to be productive of abundantly more care and watchfulness than is to be found in the deportment of the greatest part of professing Christians.

3. Do we believe in the threatenings of Almighty God, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment?—but the righteous into life eternal."

Now, whatever we may pretend, I believe there are few who THOROUGHLY believe in God's threatenings of eternal punishment to the wicked. It is not that men do positively deny this to be so; but they put off the thought, they start difficulties respecting it, they are prejudiced and selfish in forming their judgments concerning it, they half-believe and half-reject the awful denunciations. Then they consider them as applicable only to

enormous sinners : for that God “ is not extreme to mark what is done amiss,” is a sentiment frequently in their minds, and looked upon as almost of an unlimited extent. In effect, the belief of the loss of the soul in hell is usually a notion that has laid very slight hold of the mind, and, by consequence, very little affects the practice. It seldom amounts to a persuasion of the reality of what the Scripture describes as assuredly to happen at the judgment-seat of Christ, where every bad man is to receive according to the bad things he has done, and where he will be told to depart into everlasting fire, in which the worm dieth not. To say that all this is nevertheless in the mind, and is sincerely believed, but that, through the strength of men’s passions and the violence of temptation, their faith does not sufficiently restrain them from transgression and keep them within the boundaries of their judgment, is to say that their faith is in their head, and not in their heart—which is precisely the sort of faith which suits the purpose of Satan. The devils themselves believe, and tremble too, but their belief has no effect on their wicked, malignant dispositions.

But I go much further on this head. I am

fully justified by Scripture in asserting that many wicked men do not believe at all in the existence of those sad mansions of Divine vengeance and wrath. It appears very clearly that the Rich Man in the Gospel, who lifted up his eyes in torments, had not believed in such a place till he found himself there. Sad and dreadful, no doubt, was his surprise on finding that it was so ; and one of his first wishes was, that a messenger might be sent to his five brethren, to acquaint them with the discovery, and make them assured there was no delusion in the representations, of which, most probably, they had often made a laughing-stock while they were all together and he was with them on earth faring sumptuously every day.

Now, brethren, put these things together—these several important points of a Christian's belief—the presence of God ; his omniscience ; his distinct and awful threatenings of eternal punishment, that “ the wicked will be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God ;”—put these things together, examine your own hearts, talk with your friends and familiars ; and tell me whether any one of this audience can honestly say that men's faith in these things really deserves the

name. Believe me, many of us are at best but half or almost Christians. If God was really present to our minds ; if we had a deep and abiding conviction that He knew all our thoughts, and saw them before they were conceived, and traced their progress from iniquity to iniquity ; and, once more, if we were under a serious apprehension that he would certainly do with us in the next world as he has positively declared in his word,—the whole world would presently assume a different appearance. The inevitable conclusion is, We may talk, we may boast of our faith, but we have not, in fact, faith even “ as a grain of mustard-seed ;” and our prayer should be that of the Apostles in my text, “ Lord, increase our faith.”

I know not whether it may not surprise several to be told that they do not believe even the promises of God ; they do not believe that God is as *good* as he is. They are apt to think that He is as one of themselves. They will own God to be good and gracious, in so many words ; but their notions even of his mercy are quite as erroneous as their views of his justice. This, I allow, may seem somewhat more extraordinary ; but go, beloved

brethren, to your Bibles, for an illustration of this matter: pray for an insight into the holy Scriptures—the natural man understandeth them not. There is no one point in religion, no one attribute of God, that calls for just and accurate conception more than this of the Divine mercy. If men's faith in the mercy of God be erroneous, then their faith in the Gospel itself is erroneous. Search your own minds diligently. This is the very turning point of all religion: and if all good practice is to spring from a right faith, it certainly behoves you here to look well to yourselves. And here it is, I affirm, that men are most deficient, so long as ever they trust to their own understandings. And the word of God bears me out in my assertion: "The world by wisdom knew not God;" they understood not the true nature nor the extent either of God's mercy or of his justice.

All this error arises from mistaken notions of God. Men do not worship the God of the Scriptures, but a god of their own imaginations: a god who, in his government of the world, they suppose will do, not as he has said, but as they think he ought to do, and as they think they themselves would do were they possessed of his power and sove-

reignty. Hence the little effects (to speak comparatively) produced by the glad tidings of the Gospel. The Gospel is a most wonderful and mysterious provision for the happiness of fallen man. There is in it a most beneficent contrivance for man's return to God in a willing obedience, upon which his happiness entirely depends: a contrivance for restoring the penitent sinner to a holiness of character, "without which no man can see the Lord." This is a point which I would never lose sight of in any discourse, let the subject be what it will: it is, indeed, a point which necessarily pervades, and gives a peculiar cast to, every religious discussion or inquiry, whether doctrinal or practical, that can be devised. Moreover, this point is most particularly concerned in the right management of my present discourse. "Lord, increase our faith," is my text, and is the prayer of the Apostles. Now this single fact, carefully viewed, and considered under the circumstances in which the prayer took place, will do a great deal towards producing an information, an enlightening, and a conviction of the judgment of any serious and diligent inquirer.

“ Increase our faith.”—Keep in mind, that these words came from the mouths of Jews, who had then the Old Testament in their hands, containing the history of the creation, the dealings of God with their forefathers, and all the prophetical writings. Then these Jews, who were Christ’s Apostles, were not the proud, stiff-necked, worldly-minded, pharisaical rulers, who were at that time rejecting Christ Jesus and aiming at his destruction, and who actually did complete their wicked purposes a short time after in his crucifixion: no, they were men of better tempers and dispositions: they were giving up all and following Christ, and suffering persecution for his sake: they were in the habit of seeing his miracles every day, and of working miracles themselves. Reflect seriously on these things. It is not easy to imagine any one point, in the history of the Bible, which such men did not believe—viz. the extraordinary miracles wrought by God and his servant Moses; the disobedience of their forefathers, and their ensuing punishment; the anger of Almighty God; also his great compassion and pity, and his deliverance of them on many occasions. They knew and believed all these things.—Then these

Apostles were convinced that Jesus was the Christ. One of them, Simon Peter, is declared “blessed,” because God had dispelled all doubtings from his mind, so that he was induced to answer the question, “Whom say ye that I am?” by an acknowledgment that Jesus was the very Christ.—Yet, brethren, with all this knowledge of the Old Testament, and all this acquaintance (by eyesight) with the facts concerning Christ which were to form so material a part of the New Testament; and with all the conviction which could not possibly fail to be connected with such an aggregate of experience and opportunity; still these very men were conscious of the weakness of their faith, they lamented the weakness of their faith, and they prayed, to Him whose gift it is, that He would be pleased to increase their faith.—Brethren, it is impossible I should be reasoning wrong on this point: the youngest and most inexperienced mind that hears me this day, with a plain, unprejudiced, unsophisticated understanding, must see that when the Apostles pray, as in my text, for an increase of faith, it could not possibly be for a stronger belief and confidence in the *facts*. From their childhood these Jews had been brought up

in the full belief of the Old Testament ; and in regard to the new facts respecting Jesus Christ, they were daily eye-witnesses of them. The inevitable conclusion is, that in praying for an increase of their faith, they understood something more, and far different from, a mere conviction of the historical truth of the facts in question.

Hence we learn that the faith of the Gospel—that faith which saves and justifies a sinner, and renders him accepted before God—is a quite different thing from a mere historical persuasion of the great leading facts of the Old and New Testaments. This last is undoubtedly included in the right faith ; but if we stop here, we shall most assuredly fall short of the kingdom of God.

Brethren, the very circumstance of praying for “ an increase of faith,” should of itself convince us that by faith something very much beyond the persuasion of the understanding is implied : for that species of faith, when all the facts are once fairly placed before us with their evidence, is incapable of increase. The Apostles entertained no sort of doubt of the truth of the Mosaic account, or of the Prophets, or of the miracles of Christ ; yet they pray for an “ increase of faith.” With us

there are some changes of circumstances, but nothing that in the smallest degree can alter the nature of this argument. When any one of us, in these times, has looked fairly and candidly into the evidence of our holy religion, his mind is satisfied respecting it, and he is conscious that this sort of faith admits *not of increase*. And further, if a speculative faith of this sort does admit of an increase in some circumstances, it must arise from a further examination of the evidences, and a removal of objections by diligent inquiry: it is not the object of prayer, or to be acquired by prayer as a gift of God. A speculative faith of the head is not to be increased by prayer, any further than as we pray to God to preserve our faculties, and maintain in us a right use of them, without prejudice and hardness of heart.

And these considerations, brethren, lead the way to a just understanding of the nature of Christian faith; that faith which “overcometh the world,” and which “worketh by love.” The true faith of the Gospel, by which we are saved, consists, not in a mere belief (however steady and confirmed) of the leading facts on which Christianity is established, but in a reception of Christ

Jesus as our All in all, the way, the truth, the life. If I believe in Christ to the saving of the soul, I look to him and his merits solely and entirely for pardon and peace of conscience, and for acceptance before God : He is my Priest to atone for me : I look to him to govern, to guide me ; to convince me of his love, of his justice, and his mercy, and of the reasonableness of his way of salvation : He is my King, He “ is the Captain of my salvation.” Once more : if I believe in Christ, I look to him for his Holy Spirit constantly to rule in my heart, to incline my heart, to mortify bad passions and affections of every sort, to enable me to resist temptation : not to force my will, but to change it ; so that, instead of being a rebellious opponent of God and his ways, I may become a willing, submissive subject ; yet ever ready to fight manfully against the devil, the world, and the flesh. Such is the faith of the Gospel. The difference between this and a mere belief such as the devils have when they tremble, is very obvious and plain ; and moreover, it is an immense difference. Such, also, is the Divine contrivance to restore fallen man once more to the image of God in which he was created.

Human contrivance would say, and does say, “ We are not so entirely lost : we may err and stray a little, but there is in us some health : let us use that remaining health, and do the best we can, and then the Saviour will supply the deficiencies.” —Such is human contrivance ; and it is so gratifying to our pride and self-sufficiency, that it blinds us ; deceives, betrays, destroys, every day, its thousands and its tens of thousands.—The faith of the Gospel makes you listen to the kind, compassionate call of our Lord ; “ *Come unto me. Come, if you be weary and heavy laden ; with me there is rest : my yoke is easy, my burden light. But, you must come and buy of me without money and without price. Only trust yourselves to me to be healed in my way, and ye shall find rest ; and my Spirit shall bestow on you a principle of love and gratitude, which will produce infallibly both acceptable and abundant fruit, to the praise of my free grace.*”

One word in conclusion. The circumstance which makes all this hang closely in perfect harmony and connection is, that such a faith as this not only admits of increase, but will constantly call for increase. It is very apt to be weak.

Even the Apostles had not this faith equal to a “grain of mustard-seed.” Therefore, let your prayer ever be, “Lord, increase our faith.”

Brethren, if it please God that ye grow in this heavenly grace of faith, ye will also most assuredly grow in every other good thing. Ye will learn to watch over your own hearts with much more care. Your belief in the presence of God will not only increase, but become a practical and an abiding principle. Few of us, I suppose, deny the omnipresence of Almighty God in words; but in the former part of this discourse I shewed how little effect the speculative belief of this attribute has upon our practice. I dare say many are here present who never questioned the truth of the presence of God—but are not many also present who no more suffer this doctrine to influence their practice than if they supposed it to be false? The true faith of the Gospel will lead you to different things. Simplicity and godly sincerity will be manifest in the mind of the man who lives in the presence of God.

The omniscience of Almighty God is one of the most frightful reflections that can seize the mind of a wicked man: no corner of his heart

is safe from His all-seeing eye. Whereas, this very consideration affords to a true believer, who has honestly given up himself to his Saviour's guidance, the most sincere gratification and most invaluable comfort. He remembers the Scripture promise, that "God shews himself strong in behalf of those whose hearts are perfect with him." (2 Chron. xvi. 9.)

Remember the case of Simon Peter. He was grieved when Christ said to him three times, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me." What was Peter's answer on that occasion? No doubt he recollected his late baseness and his treachery in forsaking and denying Jesus; yet honest Peter, thus taking shame to himself, derives comfort from the omniscience of Christ: as though he had said, "Appearances are indeed sadly against me; yet thou, Lord, who knowest all things, knowest that I love thee." Now, my brethren, as true penitents in their deepest distress may always make this appeal with comfort, so hypocrites, half-christians, almost-christians, dare not approach the Throne of Grace, and say, "Thou knowest that I love thee."

To conclude. Brethren, there is so much ob-

vious truth in these statements, when put distinctly, as I have been enabled to put them this morning, in the plainest and simplest language, without the smallest disguise or artifice, or any one thing to support them but their truth and importance, and the dignity of the subjects I have been handling, that I am persuaded there cannot be an individual who hears me that is not convinced of the reasonableness of my arguments and the justness of my exhortations.

But one word more.—Beware of damping, quenching, stifling the good Spirit of God. If ye persist in doing violence to conscience, by frequenting pernicious, dangerous, ungodly amusements, and by joining in worldly gratifications, I can tell you it will be utterly in vain for you to pray for an increase of faith. If ye resist Satan, he will fly from you: if ye resist the good Spirit of God, he will infallibly leave you. I do therefore earnestly entreat every one, whose conscience trembles at joining in the approaching scenes of dissipation about to take place among you, to halt and reflect, and not to stifle convictions. Ye believe in the presence of God: Now, can ye believe that Almighty God is present

in such scenes with his blessing? Can ye believe this verily to be so? I know ye do not believe it: the utmost length ye can reach is, that you hope there may be *no harm in such things*; and therefore you may hope God will overlook such things. Brethren, He whose eyes are described as a flame of fire, overlooks nothing—forgets nothing. He needs not to note them in his book. when they are said to be noted there, it is merely speaking to us as men, to convince us that God never forgets.

I know not how much may, indeed, depend upon the very admonition I am now using. Of this I am sure, no man can say that the salvation of an immortal soul may not depend upon it. You all believe that God's Spirit strives with men; and you also believe that God's patience may be worn out, and he may cease to strive. Oh, brethren! then never walk near the edge of a precipice! Life is short—several of us may not live the next few days—and not one of you here present will deny that I am in my duty on this occasion. My advice, my prayer, is, that ye may have as good grounds for believing yourselves to be equally in your duty. It is at your peril, *not*

mine, if ye neglect this advice. I cannot, I will not suppose, that a single soul can treat it with levity or derision. If ye neglect exhortations and admonitions of this kind, ye may have to lament it to eternity : I, also, shall have to lament, that the truly warm and affectionate spirit which has dictated many discourses from this pulpit, and this discourse in particular, has not produced the intended effect. But I solemnly appeal to that God of all *wisdom and knowledge*, whose precious and glorious attributes I have been laying before you this day with the Gospel of His Son, that no earthly thing in which I am concerned could give me one-thousandth part of the gratification which I should receive on finding, that, not the few, but the many, not the little, but the great flock in this city were manifestly growing in grace and the knowledge of their Saviour—were turning from dead works to serve the living God—were praying incessantly, with the Apostles in my text, for an “increase of faith ;”—and that, therefore, after this our pilgrimage on earth was finished, we were all of the number of those who should meet together again in the blessed mansions of everlasting rest.

SERMON VIII.

PROV. xiv. 9.

Fools make a mock at sin.

THE original of this passage will bear another translation, not, indeed, materially different in sense : nevertheless, it may deserve to be mentioned, as it has a tendency to illustrate the views of the inspired writer. “ Fools make a mock at sin.” The other translation is, “ Fools have a method of interpreting, palliating, excusing, or explaining away their sins.” No doubt this method of treating sin, by which men strive to hide its real enormity from their own eyes, as well as from the eyes of others, is, to all intents and purposes, treating sin with levity, making a mock at sin, turning it into a jest, and making the most serious subject in the world a matter of diversion and merriment. To hear a man, for example,

undertake to defend falsehood, debauchery, duelling, under the specious names of discretion, address, spirit, and courage, what is all this but making a mock at sin?

I propose not, however, to insist on any alteration in the translation; for the more usual sense of the words in the Book of Proverbs, where they occur in various places, is, to make a mock at sin, or to sport with sin; to deride or scorn sin; and the like. The other sense, however—to excuse, to interpret, and explain away sin—may very well be included, as it seems to illustrate the manner in which foolish men make a mock at sin. Such men see nothing of its destructive nature. Sin appears to them a trifle: and their own personal sins are very slight matters indeed; there is in them nothing on account of which they think it worth while to be very uneasy. Then they have very much to say in defence of them, or at least in their palliation. There are scarcely any enormities, however dreadful, but they can put some plausible colour on them. Now all this is really making a light thing, a jest, a mock of sin. Such men scorn and deride those who view sin in a serious light, as a great evil, offensive to God

and destructive of human happiness. Moreover, at bottom it is a detestable and most unholy pride of heart, attended with much contempt and much ignorance of God's attributes, which leads men to this conduct: and in this way it is that "fools make a mock at sin."

I know not that I should go too far, were I to affirm that this method of treating sin was never more fashionable than at present. Certainly there are not many sinful practices you can mention, but they have some advocates, some vouchers, some who scruple not to defend or palliate them. They find out that either the thing itself is not so enormous, but admits of much extenuation; or the circumstances under which it was committed were very unusual, and very trying. "It was an unhappy thing," say they; "it was unfortunate, but the temptation was great: we must not be harsh judges of one another; the best of us might have fallen into the same sins, had we been in the same situation."—There is no end of this way of talking and reasoning; there is no length to which it may not proceed; and it is the effect of that deplorable, common ignorance of Scripture

principles which prevails among both the higher and lower orders of people; the effect of that neglect and contempt of catechising youth, and of disciplining them by Bible rules from their infant years. Hence it is that the consciences of men are become so stupid and senseless, notwithstanding all the affectation of extreme sensibility. Hence the fear of God is looked on as superstition, and the love of God as enthusiasm. Alas ! brethren, what can I say, to induce many of those who have had opportunities for years of opening their eyes to Gospel light, yet still go on and “make a mock at sin”—what can I say, to induce them to consider seriously the subject before us? There is no want of charity in the charge which I now venture to make : one may always make the very same charge upon any considerable congregation throughout this whole country, which nevertheless calls itself Christian,—so little is there among us of true practical Christianity. God be praised ! the light of the everlasting Gospel has shone into many hearts ; yet not so but that there is yet too much reason to ask, “ Lord, are there few that be saved ? ” and too much reason to

expect the same answer, " Strive to enter in ; for the road is narrow, the gate strait, and few there be that find it."

Nay, brethren, so far from any want of charity in so addressing a congregation of professing Christians, this treatment of the generality of large congregations, this very supposing of them (for the greater part) to be indifferent to heart-religion, to have slight views of sin, to be worldly minded, to be drinking in iniquity with a careless contempt of the contents of their Bibles, is the most charitable step that an instructor from the pulpit can take ; and the more especially if he himself has not had much opportunity of knowing the peculiar sins that are prevalent among them. For in his several suppositions of the most prevalent sins in towns and villages the preacher may make many mistakes, but on the subject before us he scarcely can be mistaken. This subject—viz. of want of seriousness respecting sin, of levity and contempt touching the effects of sinful conduct—is a subject than which none can be fixed on with greater certainty to be useful and seasonable among all sorts of hearers. Moreover, the great difference between zealous, sound teachers, and careless,

unsound teachers of the Gospel, lies much in this very thing,—the former view sin as the most dreadful and destructive of all evils, whereas the latter have slight thoughts of it. And those who have slight thoughts of sin, will, of course, have slight thoughts of that Jesus who died to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; slight thoughts of that God who hateth all sin; and, lastly, slight thoughts both of that hell which he threatens on account of it, and of that heaven for the enjoyment of which the blood of Christ redeems us. Every thing in religion turns on this point,—just views of the evil of sin. Be it then our fervent prayer, that that glorious Jehovah, whose name is Holy, and who abhors all manner of sin and iniquity, may this day teach us to know and to feel what a bitter thing sin is. And may the most hardened and insensible among us, through *His* all-powerful Spirit, have their eyes opened to discern the malignity of sin, and be brought to repentance, to a serious horror and detestation of it, and to self-abhorrence on account of it. May they never rest till they are brought to a true repentance, and are delivered from the burden of their guilt by the blood and infinite

merit of the beloved Son of God, to the praise of his grace !

In the sequel of my discourse, I would endeavour to lay open, somewhat more particularly, the three ideas contained in this short text ; “ Fools make a mock at sin.” 1. The nature of sin, with the doleful effects produced by it. 2. That men often, nevertheless, make a mock of it. 3. The character of those who do so : they are denominated “ fools.”

And now, my fellow - Christians and fellow-sinners, lend me your ears and your hearts, and apply, as we go along, to your own consciences, the awful truths I have to lay before you.

Never forget, that from your Bibles you learn that sin, which fools make so light of, and even mock at, is the very curse and misery of the creation : and most certainly there is nothing in matter of fact which should lead men to discredit the scriptural account, or treat it with levity. Does not this present state and system of the visible creation afford awful symptoms of the Divine displeasure against sin and wickedness ? What woes upon woes are exhibited on this little spot of earth which we inhabit ! What account

can be given of wars and pestilences, of hurricanes, of volcanoes, and of the frightful and numberless species of diseases and maladies of all kinds which every where abound? Is it not astonishing, that under the provisions of a God who is loving to every man, and whose tender mercies are over all his works, his creation should groan daily under loads upon loads of calamity? The just Lord will not do iniquity: the Judge of all the earth will do right. We feel in our consciences a full persuasion, that cannot be shaken by any sophistry whatever, that He must be right, and good, and wise, and all that is excellent: and yet the book of his providence is hourly exhibiting instances of woe and misery. All this must have a cause; and we are informed, both by the word of God and our most enlightened understanding, that that cause can be no other than sin.—Yes:—the intoxications of the drunkard; the curses, the perjuries, the false oaths of the man of pleasure, or the irreverent oaths of the common swearer, perpetually taking God's name in vain; the profanations of the Sabbath-breaker; the oppressions of the extortioner; the frauds and insincerities of men of business in their ordinary intercourse; the de-

baucheries and uncleanness of the profligate and licentious—these things, which men daily mock at and practise without fear or shame, these are the very things which are continually turning Love, the love of the Almighty, who never afflicts willingly nor grieves the children of men, into Fury and Wrath, and calling forth his bolts of vengeance against a guilty world.

How is it that the minds of sinners are not affected by this plain argument? God is good, infinitely good ; and the traces of his magnificent goodness are evident still, amidst all the disorders of the creation. He not only does not afflict willingly, but delights to do good to all his creatures. The kindness of the most truly benevolent man on earth is nothing, compared with that of God. Yet the world is full of misery ! Now if creatures were dutiful to their Creator, certainly He would not give them unnecessary pain in the slightest instance ; nor could the slightest accidents of a hurtful kind lay hold of them : “ the very hairs of our heads are numbered ; ” and God ceases not to do us good continually,—sinful, provokingly sinful as we are. If man had not sinned, and turned this fair earth into a wreck, Eden would

not have been the only paradise—all the earth would have been a paradise of happiness; and pain, and anxiety, and misery, would never have reached us. Hence learn, with a trembling conviction, what a dreadful thing sin must be. Sin is the departure of the heart from God. Its evil is scarcely known or seen, if we merely reflect on the harm it does to human society: it is enmity against God, enmity against goodness! Such is its nature; and there lives not a sinner who may not, if he pleases, feel how misery is joined with it in necessary connection. The first time a man drinks to excess, the head-ache, the stupidity of mind, and the debility and flatness of his spirits when he has returned to sobriety, teach him, in loud and expressive accents from God, if he would but hear his voice, that sin is an evil attended with a curse in the sight of God. The dreadful effects produced on the human frame by uncleanness, in all its wretched degrees and consequences — though no species of sin is oftener mocked at by fools, proudly thinking themselves wise, yet none more fruitful in pain and misery. The innumerable debilities; the multiplied diseases, many that have a name, and still more without a

name; and, lastly, the certain evil of premature old age,—are all so many awful intimations of God's providence to the heart of the licentious debauchee that he has offended God, while, in a thousand instances, the wretched libertine goes on boasting of his shameful success in breaking God's commandments!—I forbear to add other instances: every man of ordinary reflection may multiply them but too easily from his own observation.

It has pleased God, however, to provide a remedy for sin and its consequences. Thanks to his infinite goodness, that to us men a Saviour is given, though not to the fallen angels. If it were not so, well might we droop with our heads in despair—though still we should have no just ground for complaint. God is righteous; and we may be assured, however tremendously dreadful the thought is, He has done no injustice to the fallen spirits in leaving them to perish for ever in their sins. Those who think this harsh, and submit not their proud judgments to the righteous dealings of God in this instance, and in many other things of the same kind that might be brought from those two Divine books—viz. the book of God's Providence and the book of Scripture—prove to de-

monstration that they do not judge of sin as God judges of it; but rather that they mock at it, and see nothing of its hideous and destructive nature. Let it be repeated, then, that the Divine Goodness is for ever to be adored, in that a provision has been made for the salvation of sinners, in order that they, feeling the heavy weight and bondage of their sins, may be weary of them, and turn to God for the refreshment of his salvation.

But in this manifestation of God's love, which he recommendeth to us in Christ, what a display have we of the evil of sin! See the heavy curse of sin laid upon the innocent, spotless Lamb of God. Think ye that Jesus was made "manifest in the flesh," and made "sorrowful even unto death," and that he at last actually died upon the cross, on account of few or small offences? Nothing shews sin in so dreadful a light as the very manner made use of by Infinite Wisdom for our deliverance from its penalties. The Eternal King, the Lord of all things, is made man—is sorrowful to death—in his agony an angel comes down from heaven to strengthen him—he bleeds on a cross—he languishes and dies! Such is the power of sin, that it crucified the only-begotten Son of God, in whom

He is always well pleased ; and such the efficacy of the atonement of Christ : he drinks off every drop of the cup of the fury of the Lord.

Take another view of the dreadful nature of sin, from the consideration of hell itself, “ the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone ! ” Thither the sinner must infallibly go, if he die in his sins. No comfort, no hope of comfort !—evil spirits the sinner’s companions and tormentors !—eternal banishment from God !—the hell of a guilty conscience ever gnawing the mind ! the hell of sinful company ever present ! the hell of evil lusts ; pride, malice, and all bitter and dreadful tempers, ever reigning !—the wailing and gnashing of teeth !—and then, to complete and perfect the catalogue, *for ever and ever !*

Could we open the doors of those sad mansions, and there discover, and contemplate but for a few moments, what is passing “ where the worm dieth not ; ” and, moreover, could we hear that very Judge who died for our sins, pronounce the sentence of “ Depart, ye cursed ! ” and, further, could we see in the blessed mansions, perhaps some near relative, or dear worldly friend, in the number of those who are taken to the enjoyment of God’s everlasting kingdom, and ourselves thrust down into the

fulness of destruction, the fulness and completion of misery!—should we not then be disposed to cry out, “What a monster of deformity must sin be, to be the true, and proper, and sole cause of all these things; and in what direct opposition to a God of infinite goodness!” But this would scarcely be the whole of our exclamation: surely we should say further, “Is, then, sin to be trifled with? What, when even good men, with their natures in part renewed by the operations of God’s Holy Spirit, find sin to be their daily grief and trouble, and look on it as a material portion of their future heavenly bliss that in those blessed regions they shall have quite done with sin and all its temptations! Must not they be fools indeed, fools in principle, fools in practice, fools in perfection, that can still make a mock at sin?”

II. I have now to consider what it is to “make a mock at sin.” And having already, in my exposition of the text, explained the meaning of this crime, I purpose to confine myself to a brief illustration of the wickedness of the practice: and perhaps it may please God to give repentance to some persons who in their consciences shall know and feel that they are guilty of it.

The cases of young persons just introduced into the world, and the manner in which they are led on from one degree of sin to another by their profane companions, afford numerous instances of the contempt and derision which are exercised in support of sin. Alas ! not only the Navy and the Army, but the less extensive scenes of human life, often where no more than two or three are gathered together, furnish dreadful examples of sinful practice.

A young man, who has the advantage of a decent education, will find some difficulty (to speak generally) in overcoming the voice of conscience. His profane companions, observing something of this upon his mind, will presently endeavour to laugh him out of his scruples ; and, unhappily, they too often succeed in making him ashamed of his principles ! They represent him as under the influence of a *weak* and *foolish* squeamishness ; and they tell him that weak women only, or crazy enthusiasts, are actuated in that manner. Then they point him to the example of every one around him, and assure him that a little more knowledge of the world will free him from his unnecessary conscientiousness. He will find

it impossible, they say, to get through life in his way: he will be derided in every company, and shunned as a man of a contemptible spirit, if he do not learn a more liberal way of thinking. And then, should he venture to intimate any thing concerning the fear of God, of the awful majesty of God, and of that hell which is denounced against sin, how does their mockery break out instantly without restraint! how do they despise such niceties of conscience! how mean and low, how unlike the gentleman, the soldier, the man of the world, does such discourse appear! nay, how senseless, how melancholy, and unenlightened, does such argumentation sound in the ears of those who have long been accustomed to do evil! Then, so high and overbearing is their scorn and derision, that, unless the modest youth is fortified in an extraordinary manner, he will scarcely dare any more to open his mouth in company on the side of his Maker—though insult, not reasoning; mockery, not argument; scandalous profanations, not decent and virtuous examples, are the weapons that have been employed against him. So much more powerful, brethren, is the interest of Satan in this evil world, than that of the blessed God

who made it; and thus signally is wickedness permitted to triumph for a season.

Once more. How cautious and timorous, one may observe, a young person is apt to be, the first time he is called on to take an oath which the nature of his business or his situation may require. Here, again, what a mock do his companions, grown callous in wickedness, make of his conscientious scruples! How simple and weak he appears to them! The world, however, will soon teach him different lessons. And thus, in matters of deceit and falsehood in business, he who is afraid of sinning, and labours to do as he would be done unto, is looked on as a fool, as ignorant and inexperienced; as if the fear of God was folly, and wisdom and wickedness were sisters or brethren.

Again. A decent inexperienced youth, who finds himself brought into a new scene of affairs, will usually have his mind filled with horror at the sound of the oaths and curses of common swearers. Though he may not have the courage to rebuke, yet he can scarcely help testifying by his countenance how much he is inwardly shocked: for conscience (that awful voice of God within)

is yet tender and sensible ; and what is called by many a knowledge of the world, is nothing but the contracting of a stupid, insensible conscience, by long habit. Those, however, who make a mock at sin, will seldom rest till they have taught the unhappy youth to swear as genteelly, if they have pretensions to be gentlemen, or to use as horrid curses, if they are of a vulgar stamp, as they do themselves. They ridicule his pitiful spirit : they take pains to shew him how bold and unfeeling they are in breaking the Third and Fourth Commandments ; how indecently they can treat the public worship of God, and with what easy consciences they can profane the Sabbath continually.—Then, what a mockery do they make of prayer to God ! With what reproach do they load the characters of those who fear Him ! What hypocritical cant does it appear to them ; or, at least, they pretend to think so !—Lastly, if the youth displays any propensity to that which is indeed the ornament of youth—to modesty, chastity, and temperance—with how much contempt and bitterness do they deride his unmanly character, and what efforts do they make to inveigle him into sinful compliances and sinful in-

dulgences!—It is my earnest prayer, that the hearts of all those who in their consciences know these things to be true, may be suitably affected; that they may be struck with horror; that they may repent of the dreadful sin of drawing unthinking youths into their snare, and not bring upon themselves the wrath of a holy and angry God.

To all thinking, sober-minded persons, it may seem matter of great patience that many of these very wicked persons, who thus make a mock at sin, nevertheless have the effrontery to term themselves wise men! men of singular candour, spirit, and information! in thus casting off all fear of God, and deriding the breaches of his commandments. The writer of the Book of Proverbs, however, scruples not to call them “fools” in my text: “Fools make a mock at sin.” And it will now become me,

III. In the third and last place, to exhort most solemnly, yet in the truest Christian charity, all those obdurate beings who make a mock at sin, to repent, while there is place and time for repentance. With how much propriety are all such characters denominated “fools” in my text! Fools, and blind and deaf, indeed, ye

are to that awful principle within you, called conscience. Why, next to the saving grace of God in Christ, received in real conversion of soul and improved sanctification unto eternal life, the greatest glory and wisdom of a human creature lies in the use and exercise of conscience. How often has it spoken to you within ; how often condemned your practice ; and yet told you nothing but what is reasonable, and right, and worthy of God ! How often has it upbraided you for sin ; and how often restrained its progress and its excesses ! Certainly conscience cannot save men either from the dominion of sin or from its heavy consequences—to effect this there needs a higher principle ; viz. the special grace of God in enlightening the understanding and inclining the heart ;—yet conscience has a most wholesome efficacy, so far as its power extends. It not only restrains sin, and thereby prevents much evil, but it is also an instrument which the good Spirit of God always makes use of in the blessed work of converting souls. Weakened and abused as conscience is, through the fall of man and through bad habits, yet does it remain a precious principle ; and the best and wisest men have always cherished and

respected it. Fools only vilify it: fools only make a mock of the best and most estimable and most honourable ingredient in the human composition.

It is impossible for language to be too severe in this respect. Wickedness is become bold and daring, while modesty scarcely holds up its head. Let parents, masters and magistrates, tutors and guardians, as well as ministers of the Gospel, shew their zeal in restraining it. Alas! a selfish coldness and lukewarmness prevails too generally among men; and their passions kindle only into flame where private gain is concerned. It is the Minister's peculiar duty to pray and to exhort, if so be it may please God to touch the hearts of some with his grace. It has been my endeavour, in this discourse, to reach the conscience, because it is the property of conscience to lead the thoughts immediately to God; to the God who made us—to the God who has power to cast into hell!

Brethren, the majesty of Almighty God calls for your reverence; his holiness, for your adoration; his goodness, for your gratitude; his justice, for your fear: and will men not only cast off all fear for themselves, all fear of the Most Glorious Being, whose favour alone can make us

eternally happy, and whose displeasure alone make us eternally miserable, but endeavour also to draw others into the same ruinous mischief!—When I reflect on the behaviour and condition of such men, it raises in my mind such a variety of contradictory and distressing emotions, as I find it almost impossible to describe.

Dreadful fear, or at least awful apprehension, is one of those emotions. “Fools mock at sin.” What folly indeed! God has declared he will not be mocked; if ye mock at sin, ye mock God who hateth all sin! The holy Scriptures say, “God is not to be mocked; what a man sows, he must reap.” But I not only tremble for you—I *lament* your situation, I *grieve* for your prospects. We are all brethren of the same stock, for whom Christ died. Ye are losing your immortal souls. Why will ye die? God has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. Turn ye, turn ye, and live!

But were not your precious souls concerned in this matter, I could deride your folly and your wretched taste. But, I own, it does not become fallen creatures, brethren in guilt and misery—it does not become fellow-sinners, to deride one

another : otherwise your case lies open to the most severe satire, the most pungent ridicule. Remember who has said, “ I will mock when your fear cometh.”

Certainly, however, among the various passions which the situation of mockers at sin has a tendency to excite, contempt is one. Ye mock at sin ; the Scripture calls you fools in so doing : but I ask, whether contempt be not strictly applicable to your case ? I ask, whether your taste, as reasonable men, be not wretched and miserable and contemptible in the highest degree ? A thinking man, a judicious and an eloquent man, might freely indulge all his powers of argument here. But I forbear : in the eternal regions of torment and despair, contempt and regret and insult will have their scope without limit ! Then the disgrace of the foolish mocker at sin will be aggravated by the contempt and derision he will meet with from others, and by the remorse he will have to suffer from reflection on the past, when it shall be too late to repent.

And now, my beloved brethren, in conclusion, I would express a hope that there has not been, in all this discourse, a single sentence which has

not some tendency to divert the wicked from his ways. Whether I tremble and fear for those who dare to mock at sin; or whether I lament their wretched situation; or lastly, whether I see matter for contempt and derision in the foolish choice that they make, in preferring wickedness to holiness; all my desires, hopes, and prayers tend directly to the same point, the reformation of such extreme folly, the repentance of such egregious sinners, and the ultimate salvation of their immortal souls. The very gates of hell are opening for scoffers at sin; and though indignation, on account of their sinning with so high a hand against the Divine Majesty, be a lawful sentiment in the minds of the very best Christians, yet our indignation ought never rise so high as to exclude Christian pity and charity, and incessant, unwearied exhortation that they may leave off their evil ways and become new creatures in Christ Jesus.

This is the bright hope, the cheering prospect, which never fails to animate and support the zeal of a preacher of the Gospel. Vice of every kind dishonours the God whom he serves; and therefore to dwell on vice can never afford pleasure to him, in any other view than as he may hope to

render it odious in itself and frightful in its consequences. To set forth in its true light the unspeakable gift of the Son of God, and, as ambassadors of Christ, in Christ's stead to beseech sinners to leave off their evil ways and bring forth Christian fruits to the end of their lives, is the proper and the peculiar office of ministers of the Gospel. "Fools mock at sin," and the preacher exhibits the enormous magnitude of this folly; but this he does entirely for the purpose of impressing on the mind of the sinner the error of his ways, that he may become wise unto salvation.

Let, then, the unspeakable gift of the Son of God be our constant and never-failing theme. It is this gift which alone can make us wise. No man will continue to mock at sin who has any just sentiments in his heart of the love of God in Christ. He will ask, "What manner of love is this!" He will ask, Why was it necessary that Christ should die? why could not "the blood of bulls and of goats" take away sin?—Never, never, I verily believe, did there exist one single sound Christian, who has not repeatedly weighed this matter, who has not repeatedly put these very questions to his heart. At least, it is a very bad

sign if he has not done so. I say, if he could be content to be saved without reflecting on the magnitude of the price which bought his salvation—for then the Blood of the Covenant is with him a matter of small value, a light, a trifling consideration — one might ask, What is become of the excellency of Christ Jesus? Brethren, it is the greatness of the price that stamps the value on the redemption of man ; and it is the immense value of the redemption which demonstrates the odious nature of sin ; and it is a sight of the odious nature of sin, and of the holiness of God, which melts the heart of the sinner into love to his Maker and Redeemer, and, in one word, makes him fear God and keep his commandments. When these views have laid good hold of the heart, there is an end of mocking at sin : the poor penitent grieves to repeat sins for which Christ died. Here is a principle that cures all disposition even to palliate sin. “ Make me more holy ; give me a cleaner heart, O God ; renew a right spirit within me,” is the prayer of a sound and true penitent : whereas, those who have not yet learnt to value properly the atonement of the bleeding Saviour have much lighter notions of

sin; and sin continues to have dominion over them, more or less, till they learn better things at the Cross of Christ.

Brethren, the time does not permit me to dilate on this instructive branch of my subject; but I trust I have said enough to shew you, that, besides making a mock at sin in a very open and shameful manner, thousands and tens of thousands are silently, as it were, guilty of it, on account of the light and trifling conceptions which they have of sin, or of its opposite, true holiness. Brethren, it is this very disposition to trifle with sin, to think lightly of it, to defend, mitigate, or palliate sinful practices, which is the cause of the exceeding low standard of morals which appears among professing Christians in most countries where Christianity is established. It is this which makes men hear a chapter read in the Bible on the Sabbath, and read profane, immoral books in the course of the week: makes them go to church on the Sunday, and on the Monday to gaming tables and other scenes of wickedness. All this implies a heart either actually and literally making a mock at sin, or on the very edge of doing so. On former occasions, I have endeavoured with all my

powers, and I hope with a good conscience, to lay open to you these dangerous practices : this morning I have again both exhorted you to beware of making a mock of sin, or trifling with sin in any degree ; and have also pointed out to you the grand Remedy for this and every other evil that keeps your hearts from an intercourse and communion with God.

I will now conclude my discourse with a very few words, addressed,

First, To those who have made some profession of religion—have seemed to run well—but have begun to trifle with sin, and are in danger of becoming permanent backsliders, to the loss of their immortal souls.

Believe me, my brethren, or believe me not, ye may rest assured that your religion, if you really possess any, will not thrive, if you live like the rest of a giddy, thoughtless world—that is, if ye cease to be a peculiar people, not in an affected singularity, but in all the substantials of a holy and upright conduct : if your light does not shine before men ; if they do not see that you fly from sin and sinful practices ; that sin is a burden to you ; that your religion does not consist in mere

notions or outward peculiarities, but you are daily “fighting a good fight.” overcoming sin, and gaining victory over your besetting sins. Brethren, in one word, the grand distinction is this : So long as I perceive a real tender conscience towards God, with a lively faith in Christ, visibly pervading the whole temper, and subduing pharisaism, on the one hand, and, on the other, fleshly lusts which war against the soul, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ ; I thank God, I rejoice, and am humbly confident that all must be going on well. But when the conduct but too much resembles that of the rest of the world, and is too little like the few followers of Jesus ; when “growth in grace” seems damped by the cares of life, the pleasures of life, the deceitfulness of riches, the grandeur of aggrandizement ; and when instances from time to time begin to appear of decided backsliding, if any progress had been made, or of ceasing to improve, in cases of doubt and uncertainty,—one cannot, then, be too earnest in impressing ideas of warning and danger ; one cannot be too loud, or too frequent, in crying out, Watch ! I say unto you all, Watch ! Many thousands, who once thought it impossible that they should ever

have made a mock at sin, have been led, step by step, till conscience was hardened, and iniquity became their ruin.

In the second and last place, Let me leave a few sentences of most important advice and exhortation on the minds of those who have no pretensions even to the character of backsliders ; who have no remembrance of ever having been truly religious ; who have all their lives been either careless and negligent, or, what is still worse, have treated sin with levity, made a mock of it, like the “ fools ” of my text, and become hardened in iniquity. Now, dreadfully and dangerously bad as the case of such persons undoubtedly is, yet, if one could but fortunately find a moment when their consciences are a little more than ordinarily awake to their situation and to their prospects, even these men would allow that they need amendment ; that they ought to amend ; that, however merciful God may be supposed to shew himself at the Last Day, still they run a great hazard, and their wisdom is to turn from evil and learn to do good. The grand mistake of such persons constantly is, that they fancy it is always in their own power to become better : they therefore harbour a sort of obscure and ambiguous

resolution to amend at some future time ; and as they hope to die in that state of amendment, they trust their past bad condition will be forgotten, and their present better state accepted—accepted, probably they will add, through the merits of Jesus Christ. I say, there are very few men of this class, if they are at all honest and ingenuous, who will not confess I have exactly described their feelings, their sentiments, their hopes, and their expectations. If, then, they give me credit for understanding their case, let them attend diligently to my prescription ; let them listen seriously to that important advice and exhortation which I have to offer.

I observe, in the first place—and very awful the observation is !—that a very large portion of the class of men now before us, usually drops into the grave before they have made any attempt whatever to amend ; and, dreadful to relate ! are thus carried to God's judgment-seat before they have begun to put their resolutions in practice ! And, further, of the few that remain, and do live to make some efforts at reformation of conduct—*they* only succeed, to any real and salutary

purpose, who learn at the Cross of Christ to proceed upon a better system than their own self-righteous resolutions of amendment. This may appear sufficiently strange; but, notwithstanding any surprise that may be excited by this statement, I must impress it, and I cannot too strongly impress it, both on the understanding and the conscience, that it would be much stranger if it were not so. Strange indeed would it be, and even alarming to the faith of every disciple of Christ, if true reformation of conduct could be obtained—that is, if sin could be overcome, and holiness acquired (that holiness which qualifies a man to “see the Lord”)—in any other way than through Christ crucified.

Mark well the distinction! The earnest endeavours and the resolutions of a pharisaical character *may* in the end lead to better things: an attempt to amend bad practice may assist in opening the understanding to a better knowledge of the Law of God; and then the Law will become a schoolmaster, to bring a man to Christ. Therefore there is always reason to rejoice when one sees a sinner leave off some of his evil ways, even though

his motives are imperfect, or altogether unsound : any thing is better than to continue hardened in sin. But we must be exceedingly careful not to stop here ; not to rest contented with a partial amendment of the exterior conduct, while the heart is not wholly given up to God in humility, sincerity, and perfect willingness to keep all his commandments. And, mark well again ! such a state of the heart is never to be obtained except by a believing application to the Redeemer, in humble prayer, for his grace to overcome sin, and subdue every thought into a voluntary captivity to the obedience of Christ.

Once more ; mark well my advice and exhortation on this all-important point : I will leave it with you, expressed in the concisest terms I can imagine or devise. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for every blessing, for every comfort, for every hope and expectation, present and future, in this world and in the next. Apply to him for these things in prayer, steadily and uniformly. Receive him in all his offices. To receive him ; to believe in him ; to apply to him ; to have faith in him ; are expressions which all mean the same thing,

and are as essentially different from a mere faith of speculation, a mere belief in the history of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, as light is from darkness.

Now, if you follow this advice, you must expect to be misrepresented, perhaps derided and insulted as an enthusiast who makes a mere faith of speculation every thing, and who maintains that the wickedest man in the world, if he have but faith, though he continue in his sins, will infallibly go to heaven. This cross and misrepresentation you are to bear patiently; and, by letting “your light shine before men, that they may see your good works,” you are to confute their false statements, soften the harsh and erroneous judgments they have formed of you, and lead them, if it should so please God, to a happy change of their own views, tempers, and practice. Always remember that you yourselves were once in the same state of blindness and darkness.

Brethren, there is no essential reformation of conduct, no conquest to be made of sin, but through the help of Christ. Go to him as a poor sinner, in penitence and faith, “and he will ill-

no wise cast you out.” Neither is there any perseverance in good conduct, but through precisely the same means.

May Almighty God, of his great mercy, be pleased not only to give us a right judgment in all things, but also to incline our hearts, that we may continue in firm faith, and steady obedience to his holy commandments, even unto our life's end.

SERMON IX.

LUKE xvi. 31.

And he said unto them, If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

THIS is so remarkable a passage of Scripture, that I scarcely remember any eminent divine who has published sermons and not made this the text of some one of them. And with great reason : for as the design of all Scripture is to bring the fallen offspring of Adam to a right knowledge of God, to awaken them from a state of carnal indulgence or slothful indifference, and to encourage them to seek salvation in the Gospel way ; so the text which I have just read to you is a portion of Scripture admirably calculated to promote these great purposes.

This declaration of our Lord, “ If they hear

not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead," must be *taken strictly*. When *men* use expressions of this nature with regard to each other, we are well aware that they are often to be received with considerable restriction. For example: when affectionate parents are grieved on account of the disobedience of their children and their neglect of repeated admonitions, they will frequently exclaim, with impatience, that "It is in vain to say or to do more than has been done: it is all to no purpose: such and such advice has been rejected; such and such steps have been taken without effect: there is nothing further to propose or to hope." This language of grief and disappointment, we know very well, by no means excludes all future trials, or future expectation of amendment: neither are the persons who use it to be understood as abandoning all hope, or giving themselves up to despair. But the solemn declarations of our Lord are not to be placed on a level with our hasty and inconsiderate effusions. When the Divine Saviour asserts, with an emphatical repetition, that "they had Moses and the Prophets, and ought to hear them; and that if

they would not listen to them, they would not be persuaded even though one rose from the dead ;” we must make no allowance for the use of figurative language, or hyperbolical amplification: we must not suppose that the plain meaning of the words, as they stand, implies any thing less than the strict truth ; we must not suppose that they were spoken with a rhetorical sort of licence, for the purpose of making the greater impression.

It is of great importance to keep in our minds this observation, and others of a similar kind, while we read the holy Scriptures. For if we once begin to assume to ourselves the liberty of lessening the plain meaning of particular passages of holy Writ, according to our own fancy and inclination, there is no saying where such a dangerous practice will terminate. The clearest injunctions, the most awful warnings, the richest promises, and the kindest encouragements, may all be made to bend in different ways under so great licence of interpretation, or even to dwindle into insignificance.

One of the most common modes of evading the force of Scripture has often been, to suppose that what we find in those sacred pages does not

belong to us. “ It belongs to the Jews ; perhaps to the first Christians ; or to the Gentiles in those early times.” This has been said again and again, in many instances. In the present case, however, there is not the smallest opening for such a supposition : the argument is entirely the other way. Thus : the Jews were told, that “ if they would not hear Moses and the Prophets, they would not be persuaded though one arose from the dead.” Now, every circumstance which could make this a good argument to the Jews in our Saviour’s time, applies to us, who profess the Christian religion, in full force, and with the addition of very many and most powerful motives on the same side.

In the first place, we have not only the Old Testament, containing the very same things for our instruction which the Jews of our Saviour’s time had ; but we have also the succeeding history of the Jews, confirming in a most remarkable manner the Mosaical and other prophecies, by their dispersion among the nations, and their unparalleled obstinacy and hardness of heart. Then we have the New Testament in addition, with all the treasures contained in it of immortality brought to light by the Gospel. We have

the history of Christ and his Apostles, with all the astonishing narratives of their lives, and doctrine, and the miracles which they wrought. And, still further to confirm our faith, we are in possession of numerous authentic documents respecting the progress of the religion of Christ in various parts of the world, and its never-failing influence on men's minds wherever its precepts have been cordially received and obeyed. If, then, it were true at the time of our blessed Lord, that the admonition of a messenger from the invisible world would produce no salutary effect on the mind of any Jew who had rejected the teaching of Moses and the Prophets, what probability can there be that such a messenger in our times, arriving from the sad mansions of the wicked in hell, should be able to persuade a professing Christian to exercise a true repentance and faith unto salvation, when his Bible, consisting both of the New and Old Testament, had failed to do so, and when he had also shut his eyes and hardened his heart against God's dealings with the Jews for so many years on account of their incurable impenitence? Alas! what reason can any one have to suppose, that even a wretched sufferer,

returning from his punishment to this earth, for the purpose of testifying to his brethren, his old associates or companions, concerning the reality of the place of torment, should have more persuasive effect by his sad tale, than all the miraculous accounts of Moses and the Prophets, and the consideration of the well-known state of so many thousands of hardened Jews suffering under God's heavy displeasure at this moment for their hardness of heart and rejection of their Saviour,—especially when it is remembered that Moses and the Prophets foretold these very things many ages ago?

It is no defect of evidence of the nature and certainty of the eternal punishment of the wicked, which is the cause of men's unbelief in God's future judgment: it is their indisposition to give up their worldly pursuits, it is their attachment to carnal ease, pleasure, and indulgence, that unfits them for care and diligence in spiritual concerns, and for labour and perseverance in endeavouring to escape the dismal consequences of sin and transgression. It is not want of light which is to account for that darkness in which worldly men walk; it is because they love darkness better than light: and, again, the scriptural reason

of their loving darkness better than light, is, that their deeds are evil.

When a man is determined to shut his eyes, the light of the brightest luminary of the heavens will make no more impression on him than the flame of a little taper. Moreover, when men have wilfully resisted such degrees of evidence as God in his kind providence has been pleased to afford, we have good reason to believe that He withdraws his Holy Spirit, which otherwise might direct their judgment ; and thus the heart becomes hardened, the conscience benumbed and insensible, the eyes can scarcely see, and the ears wax dull of hearing. And this consideration may make it perfectly intelligible to us, how those, who resist such a mass of evidence as is contained in their Bibles, may, by the just judgment of God in his anger, become at length insensible to any means that can be employed for their repentance and conversion.

I have premised these observations, because I have observed how, by a natural curiosity, we are often drawn to consider whether the narration of one rising from the dead, would, or would not, have a greater effect on men's minds than the

reading of Moses and the Prophets. But we should remember not to stop here: the parable suggests much more important matter. It has been interpreted by writers in various ways: but, to my understanding, the prominent and striking point in it is that conviction, which most clearly appears to be in the Rich Man's mind when in torments, that (while he was alive among his brethren on earth) he had not believed that such a scene of awful retribution would actually take place in the world to come. He had himself lived in wealth, and ease, and splendour; and, for aught that appears, had not been deficient in liberality—(the story of Lazarus at his gate intimates the contrary, as far as it goes);—but he had neglected the care of his soul; he had neglected “the one thing needful;” he had not troubled himself to escape the torments of hell, and to obtain the blessed mansions of rest: and it is very plain that this neglect, with all its dreadful consequences, is by him ascribed to *a defect* in his belief—that is, he was either of a sceptical or of an infidel turn of mind. It is not at all necessary to suppose that he was a confirmed infidel; it is quite sufficient to suppose him to have been

careless and indifferent about it. He might say, as thousands say in our times, "It is true Moses and the Prophets say so it will be; but who are Moses and the Prophets? Some deny their authority entirely, others in part: some explain the Bible in one way, and some in another. I will give myself no further trouble concerning it, till more satisfactory interpretations have ascertained the truth. I will enjoy the good things which Providence has bestowed: the poor shall feed at my gate; Lazarus shall have the fragments of my table; but I will not render the present time uncomfortable, by dubious and perplexing meditations on the future." Thus far we are quite certain of rightly interpreting the Rich Man's views; and it is an excellent rule in explaining Scripture, and building practical doctrines on it, always to separate what is quite certain from what is doubtful or ambiguous.—Then, in the next place, it is quite certain, that as soon as the Rich Man was surprised on lifting up his eyes in hell, and had tasted of those bitter torments, he was most anxious to have his five brethren informed of the certainty of the existence of a hell, and of what he himself was actually suffering. He well

knew that they were living on earth in the same course of careless or sceptical indifference respecting a future world in which he himself had lived ; and his views of things were now so much altered, that he wished them to repent, and escape the same place of torment. -

Still you will observe, that it was the idea of *their unbelief* which dwelt heavy on his mind. It is true he connected their impenitence with their unbelief ; but all his hesitation and anxiety appears to have been respecting their unbelief. They did not believe in such a future scene of retribution in the next world. Let but Lazarus go and tell them it really was so ; let him but testify to them from the dead ; and he thought they would repent, as a matter of course, and escape that place of torment.

Thus do we collect, without the smallest degree of uncertainty or ambiguity, that the Rich Man and his brethren, though they had the constant use of Moses and the Prophets, did not believe in those writings. “ The wicked,” says the Psalmist, “ shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God.” But such clear and awful denunciations made no impression on them : they

continued to neglect and to despise God's warnings, till the Rich Man, by his own woful experience, found them to be true : and his confession to Abraham distinctly implies that it was his opinion that the unbelief both of himself and his brethren was the proper cause of their impenitence.

If we keep in mind this view of the parable, the information contained in it, and the practical inferences to be deduced from it, will be found of the greatest consequence.

Our blessed Saviour, in delivering this parable for the use of the church in all ages, teaches us to understand, by the case of the Rich Man and his five brethren, that worldly men, living sumptuously in the plenty and abundance of the good things of this life, are apt to give themselves little trouble about eternity : they do not believe that God will certainly do as he has threatened. It is not that every man of this sort argues himself into a settled and confirmed unbelief against evidence : No : I believe, where there is one who has so perverted his understanding by what may be called laborious chains of sophistical argumentation, there are hundreds who, like the Rich Man before us, stifle their convictions, turn a deaf ear to advice,

shut their eyes to evidence; and so spend their years in a dull and thoughtless indifference, or in vain and pernicious amusements; hating to be reformed, dreading to review their past lives, lost to all relish for virtuous and religious attainments, and spending day after day in an insipid repetition of diversified vanities.

I have often been surprised, in reading the Bible, to find how large a portion of it is employed in reprehending the unbelief of mankind;—and have further thought, that it would be useful to select those parts of Scripture, and put them together, and give them a distinct consideration. The ancient Jews were excessively prone to idolatry; and, consequently, much of the complaint of unbelief in the Old Testament applies to the Jews, for rejecting the one God, Jehovah. But after their Captivity, and especially at the time of our Lord's appearance in the world, this had ceased to be the case; and, so far from finding that they rejected Moses and the Prophets, in the grand article of the belief of one God, we find them zealously attached to the Pentateuch, as far as forms and ceremonies were concerned. But, alas! they had for a long time lost the spiritual

meaning of the Mosaic law and dispensation. they strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel: they devoured widows' houses, while for a pretence they were making long prayers: proud Pharisees despised humble Publicans; and thus, while they were living in an habitual violation of the great practical rules of morality, they vainly flattered themselves that, as Abraham's children according to the flesh, they must still be the favourites of Heaven, and that all things would go well with them in the end. St. Paul owns that "they had a species of zeal for God, but not according to knowledge:" and our Saviour, in that memorable conversation with Nicodemus, in which he enforced the absolute necessity of being born again of the Spirit, expressly told him, that, as a master of Israel, he ought to have understood his Bible much better than he appeared to do.

To believe in the one true God, is the foundation of every thing that is right in religion; nevertheless, the parable informs us, that, consistently with a general belief of the existence of God, there may be a most destructive scepticism or infidelity respecting God's moral government. To what purpose, then, do we believe in God, if

we do not believe in his attributes of justice, mercy, and faithfulness? To what purpose do we profess obedience to his commandments, if we disbelieve in the penalties which are the sanctions of the Lawgiver for their enforcement? The Rich Man in our parable believed in God, but not in the God of the Scriptures. I know no reason for supposing him to have been an idolater: he probably attended the Jewish synagogue regularly, and heard the Law read and expounded; yet was he an unbeliever, and through his unbelief he lost his soul in hell, though he had gained the whole world. The parable is pregnant with instruction; yet, after all, it will be of little service to us, if we do not make an application of it to our own case and circumstances.

Ye believe in God; and ye profess to believe in his Son, and are baptized in his Name, and have promised to fight manfully under his banners against your spiritual enemies—the devil, the world, and the flesh. Now, besides these general heads of the Christian faith, a very material branch of the Gospel dispensation is that ye should believe in the resurrection from the dead; that “we must all appear before the judgment-seat

of Christ, there to receive according to what has been done in the body, whether it be good or bad ;” and lastly, that the consequences of this judgment will be, that the wicked will be ordered to depart into everlasting fire, and that the righteous will be called *blessed*, and will be directed into life eternal. This is the very point to which our present attention is called by the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. The Rich Man and his five brethren had not believed Moses and the Prophets in this very matter. In the observance of meats, and drinks, and holy days, in the washing of hands, and cleansing various utensils, they were probably very exact and attentive ; but they had not believed in the judgment of the Last Day, and in its dreadful consequences to the wicked—though the prophet Daniel, speaking in express terms of the resurrection, had said, that “ some should rise to everlasting life, and others to shame and everlasting contempt.”

Further. This is the very point to which our closest attention should be turned ; the point to which our self-examination should very often be drawn. Do we or do we not believe that

Almighty God will do as he has said? Jesus Christ came to save that which is lost: Do we or do we not believe, that, unless he had in his boundless compassion surrendered his life for us on the cross, we should have been eternally lost—lost to all happiness; assigned to “weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth?” Is this thoroughly and heartily believed, or is it rejected as old wives’ fables?—or is the awful truth, if not absolutely rejected, received but weakly, and with doubtful disputation; seldom reflected on gravely; never enforced as the strongest ground for thankfulness on account of our deliverance, through God’s mercy, from the sentence of the curse?

Unbelief, I have observed, is reprobated in Scripture repeatedly. The fact is, unbelief has many turns and windings in the human heart; but there is none in which Satan has proved more successful than in every thing that respects the future punishment of sinners; and when faithful ministers and teachers warn men of these things, then, like the Rich Man in the parable, they require some further evidence of the truth of what appears to them harsh and severe: they are apt to cry out, Does God really deal with departed souls in the manner

represented in Scripture? Let us (say they) have some incontrovertible evidence that it is so: let some persons rise from the dead, and we will then give credit to such infallible witnesses. Such was the language of unbelief in our Saviour's time; and, if I do not greatly mistake, such has its language ever been, and such is the language often used at this very day. Therefore the study and contemplation of this parable will always be productive of beneficial consequences.

For this purpose, I will now detain you a little longer, with some practical thoughts on the subject, which may, by God's blessing, prove useful to diligent students of their Bible.

1. First, I suppose you to read this parable with care and with seriousness, and for the purpose of obtaining some instruction. I say, with care and seriousness; for if you are not in earnest, if you take up your Bible with only a light or formal spirit, nothing is to be done; no good is to be expected, no good will ensue. But, on the supposition of a devout and serious disposition of mind, that seeks after truth with diligence, and with concern for the salvation of the soul, I would earnestly advise no time to be lost on any

puzzling and intricate questions. I would say, lose not much time even on such a particular question as this; Whether the evidence of Moses and the Prophets, and of the New Testament, be or be not a more persuasive and substantial evidence of God's present and future dealings in the invisible world, than any thing that could be done or said by messengers sent on purpose to relate what they had seen and felt of the torments of the wicked. The single inquiry which, as wise and rational beings, you are to make, is simply this; Whether God, in his merciful dispensations towards us, has not afforded *sufficient* evidence that such is and such will be the case? Whether or not we do not find, that, dismissing all fanciful and useless meditations respecting what God could do or might do in this matter, he has *actually* done all that can be necessary to awaken men's consciences, and convince their judgments of the truth of those awful declarations with which the holy Scriptures abound, when they are describing the deplorable condition of those who are driven from the presence of God for ever and ever? It is not, I am persuaded, for light or trivial purposes that the denunciations now alluded to are thus

recorded in the word of God. I can never believe that it was a matter of indifference, or, as it were, almost by accident, that, on the one hand, the blessings of the righteous in the next world should be represented as beyond what “the heart of man can conceive;” or, on the other hand, that, in regard to the wicked, it should be expressly said that “the smoke of their torments should ascend up for ever.” No; I believe these things were intended to lay firm hold of our wisest judgments, and deeply affect our soberest imaginations with the immense consequences of attending to such extraordinary pieces of instruction in every part of our practice.

2. Again : The mischief of delay is exceedingly great in this matter ; for while men are discontented with the evidences which God has afforded them, and are ruminating with a vain curiosity concerning the day of judgment, and God’s dealings with his creatures in that awful scene, they not only soon affect to wish for stronger, or clearer, or more various evidences, but learn to despise those evidences which God has actually vouchsafed to grant them for the direction of their conduct : and thus, because the matter is not made quite

so clear as they fancy it might be made, they determine to reject totally the warnings which God in his mercy has given them for their protection against sin, and for the salvation of their souls.

Mark well how this was the very case of the Rich Man who saw Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, upon lifting up his own eyes in torments: He never had believed in the eternity of future punishment till that moment; and then he foolishly thought that a messenger from the dead would have conquered that infidelity of his five brethren which had hitherto been found invincible. But he was told by Abraham, at that time in heavenly enjoyments, that he was quite mistaken in thinking so.

Brethren, ye will do well to examine your own hearts thoroughly on this matter, and see whether there be not in them some mischievous, secret, lurking unbelief, which undermines the vigour of every honest resolution, and makes you sit down and acquiesce in an unproductive state of inactive indifference. How different is this from our Lord's instructive declaration? "Herein," says he, "is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."

Indeed, brethren, cold, sceptical views of the great scriptural truths, or a doubtful, inefficient belief of the revealed word, will never be blessed with much real Christian fruit. Rather, then, accustom yourselves to ask such questions as these ; namely, Did not Jesus Christ come to redeem that which was lost ?—and then carefully examine your own creed, and tell me what you sincerely mean by the word lost : you must have a distinct meaning for that term, or your creed will be unintelligible in a very material article. Then, secondly, Do you, by the term lost, mean to confess that “ you are by nature children of wrath ?” Does not this expression, with many others which might be quoted, denote the wrath of God, as threatened to be inflicted on sinners in the world to come ? And is it possible, consistently with a due regard to this and to a multitude of similar passages, to understand any thing short of the loss of the soul in hell, “ where the fire is not quenched and the worm dieth not ?”

But reflect, once more, How is it possible to have a just idea of the value of Christ's Redemp-

tion, unless you form distinct ideas of the nature of that loss from which you are redeemed? And, what is of still greater consequence, how is it possible that your love to the Redeemer should rise to its just height, if you are not truly sensible both of the blessings which he has purchased for you, and the dreadful sentence from which he has delivered you by his death, his atonement, and intercession? He himself has observed, that the sinner to whom the most was forgiven, would be induced to love him the most. All this, brethren, is consistent with the words of Christ himself, with the general stream of Scripture, and with the common sense and apprehensions of mankind.

In this discussion of the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, nothing can be further from my mind than to indulge either a spirit of vain curiosity, or a spirit of abstruse and metaphysical contention. Our curiosity, indeed, is stifled at once, by the positive declaration, that if Moses and the Prophets are not believed, the evidence of a messenger from the invisible regions would be rejected: and in regard to a controversial inquiry respecting the nature of the two sorts of evidence, though I have freely acknowledged, that in my

mind that of Moses and the Prophets decidedly preponderates, I have yet earnestly besought you to lay no material stress on that circumstance, but *to profit* by fixing your attention on the statement which I have laid before you as comprehending the great and important use of the parable. There is evidence enough : the evidence of God's dealings at the day of judgment is abundant and satisfactory in the highest degree :—then there is neither necessity nor use in making nice and cold comparisons of one species of evidence with another. You are told, by Divine Authority, that if you reject the evidence of your Bible, you would infallibly reject the dismal narrative of any one who should return from the dead. Unbelief, then, is the thing ye have to dread. This, according to my view and explanation of the parable, is its turning point ; and it is here that is concentrated its grand practical use and significance. Many persons think they may safely let alone the consideration of the doctrine of God's future punishments : they look on it as a point of indifference whatever opinion they may choose to form on that subject : but if I have been successful in my arguments and positions in this discourse, I have convinced you

that unbelief, or even scepticism, in so material an article of our faith, leads to most defective views of the Gospel dispensation and redemption by Christ. I have shewn you that the matter is at once brought to issue by putting the question on such words as “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us:” for what is the curse of the Law? what does that curse comprehend? at what point does it begin, and where terminates its operation? These questions must be answered; the sinner must know from what he is redeemed; or else the nature of Christianity will be left in obscurity, or else the sense of obligation will dwindle, or else love and gratitude will wax cold and insensible.

Brethren, it is the right consideration of these things—that is, it is a strong sense of the misery from which we are delivered by “the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”—that commends the love of God both to our understandings and affections, when we are once made sensible that while we were yet sinners, lost sinners, “Christ died for us.” It is this that sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, and inflames them with desires of a holy and universal obedience to His laws. Moreover, it

was the great object of Divine Revelation to open to us the nature of our lost situation ; to shew us that we were “ children of wrath,” eternal wrath ; but yet, by God’s grace in Christ Jesus, we may become heirs of eternal glory. The holy Scriptures abound in proofs of these great articles of the Christian faith. Never suppose that the operation of any new miracles is requisite for our salvation. The price was paid the moment our blessed Lord pronounced the affecting words, “ It is finished !” He demonstrated that it was so by his glorious resurrection for our justification by faith in his blood. The mere miracle of one returning with information from the dead would have no effect in changing the heart, without the “ grace of God by Christ preventing us,” as our Article says, “ that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that will.” If, then, you are sensible of the burden of sin, and are weary of it, fly to Him who invites you to come, and who “ is able to save to the uttermost” all that return to him in true penitence ; and you will find, as He has promised, “ his yoke easy, and his burden light.”

You learn from the Bible what little effect the most splendid miracles have at any time produced

in turning men from their wickedness to serve the living God. The ancient Israelites “heard God speak from the midst of the fire:” and they trembled when they saw Mount Sinai smoke and shake exceedingly: yet, notwithstanding all the wonders which they saw in Egypt and at the Red Sea and in the Wilderness, how soon did they sin against God, and how soon were they again besotted with idolatry! Our great ancestor, Eve, was quickly induced to fancy that God would not do as he had threatened: “Ye shall not die,” said the serpent to her; and so she ate of the forbidden tree. Again: The inhabitants of the old world derided Noah for one hundred and twenty years, while the ark was preparing: the sun shone, and the seed-time and harvest succeeded one another regularly; and no doubt men would say, God will never send waters to destroy all living creatures.—This unbelief, brethren, seems to be an essential ingredient in the fallen, depraved nature of man. It is our business to be ever aware of this, to look narrowly into ourselves, and to watch its progress and its growth. We, of this happy country, profess the name of Christ, and call ourselves his followers, his servants, and dis-

ciples—and we have the best reasons every day to bless God that the true religion of Christ is established and protected by the government under which we live;—but these very circumstances, so inestimable both in their intrinsic value and in their consequences, are apt to make us less on our guard against many temptations, and more particularly this very dangerous one of unbelief. Even the name of *Christians* seems to exclude all reasonable suspicion of unbelief. “He is a Christian: therefore his faith is sound; he must hold, he must maintain, all that a Christian ought to hold and to maintain.” Not so, my beloved brethren: many of us are far short of being sound in our belief; a great many are careless and indifferent, and know not distinctly what they believe or what they reject. We all of us profess to acknowledge that the Scriptures contain “the words of eternal life;” but who is there among us who heartily and uniformly obeys that Divine injunction, “Search the Scriptures?” who is there among us who searches and examines for himself, with that care and concern with which he looks into the title-deeds of a worldly estate or possession?

Thus I have endeavoured to keep as close as possible to a single point of very great importance—namely, the dealings of God, the threatenings of God, as they regard the next world, and are to be executed at the day of judgment, in the final destruction of all impenitent workers of iniquity. There is among us, on this subject, a great deal of indolence, of indifference, of scepticism, of actual unbelief. With your eyes open, you cannot but see this plainly in many instances; and you have good reason to suspect it in many more. True candour consists not in stifling evidence, but in paying a just regard to it. However, the wise thing is always to look diligently to ourselves; and there the best of us may soon perceive, if not the produce and fruit, yet the seeds, in plenty, of the unbelief we are now considering.

May God, of his infinite mercy, grant that these feeble endeavours of mine may put you upon closely thinking and reviewing your own secret sentiments on this awful subject, and comparing them with what you find in Scripture! For be assured, that, connected with this subject, indissolubly connected with it, are right notions of the evil of sin against a Holy God, and right notions

of the redemption of Christ ; and, what is still more, right notions of applying to the Redeemer for deliverance, for an interest in his meritorious propitiation, and for the gracious helps of his Holy Spirit, to enable us to glorify his holy Name by a godly, righteous, and sober life.

SERMON X.

JOHN v. 34.

These things I say, that ye might be saved.

THE salvation of the soul, as that term is used in a Christian country, always implies both its complete deliverance from an eternal state of misery and punishment, and its security and happiness in a blessed immortality. One sees at once, therefore, that all other subjects, compared with this, the salvation of the soul, dwindle into insignificance. Strictly speaking, no other subject can be compared with it. The pains of all worldly adversities and misfortunes will in a short time subside, as though they had never existed; and so will the most agreeable and delightful scenes of human life. It is not so with those whose sentence shall be, “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting

fire :” their worm dieth not, and “ the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever !” Also not so with those who at the resurrection shall be conducted to sit down at the right hand of God : “ they shall reign for ever and ever.” It is the durability, it is the eternity of the situations, that makes the great difference between the present world and the next. It is true, those on the left hand will weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth, with sensations to us, I believe, inconceivable ; and in regard to those on the right hand, also, we are expressly told that “ eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the good things which God hath prepared for them :” yet still it is the fixed, the unalterable, the eternal state, of both the righteous and the wicked, which so awfully marks the distinction between the loss of the soul in hell, and the salvation of it in heaven. “ What,” therefore says our Lord, “ shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ?” And in the same spirit he advises us to endeavour to gain heaven, as our primary object ; and then we shall infallibly obtain as much of this world and its goods as will be of any sort of use to us.

“ Seek *first* the kingdom of God, and these things shall be added unto you.”

It is, I apprehend, such serious and scriptural views of the subject as these, which have fixed that awful meaning to the words *salvation of the soul*, which we all are disposed to acknowledge when the question is put closely to us. We own at once that the words denote the eternal state of the soul after death and judgment—a state of complete happiness or misery ;—and, accordingly, there are very few who, when they are brought to reflect on a future state, will not say, “ I hope for salvation,” or, “ I hope I shall be saved.”

Be it observed, that at present I do not condescend to take notice of such expressions as, “ As I hope for salvation,” or, “ As I hope to be saved,” though commonly enough used, when these are thrown out in the ordinary sallies of profane or careless language : the animadversions suitable to such an unchristian way of speaking belong to a different subject. I would now draw your attention to the grave and serious use of the words—for example, as they are very often used by persons likely to die, or in a declining state of health ; or, perhaps, in a thoughtful state of mind

on account of the declining health or dangerous situation of some near friend and relative. Now, in numberless cases of this sort it is to me matter of the utmost astonishment to hear men express their hopes of salvation, either as it may respect themselves or their friends, with the utmost ease and confidence. They do not mean to express a bare hope or conjecture which they think not very probable, but a thing which really is likely to take place in the issue: not a kind wish of an affectionate mind, extorted by compassion contrary to the judgment, but the result of their belief and conviction, so far as in matters of this sort they have taken the trouble to exercise their rational faculties.

You hope to be saved, or, you hope for the salvation of your souls; and perhaps you are disposed to ask, What right any one has to question your hopes, or damp your expectations; to disturb your diversions, or frighten you from your pleasures?—It is the duty of a faithful Christian instructor, in all such cases, not to be deterred by the imputation of wanting candour, from inquiring into the grounds of these your hopes, so common, so almost universal. Brethren, far be it from me

to narrow the mercy of God ; but, I *must* divert the blind from traversing a road where they will never find it.—You “ hope to be saved.” You profess to believe your Bible ; and the Bible tells you that the road to life is narrow ; and adds, in so many explicit words, that, “ there are but few that find it.” There is not, I think, a more alarming declaration in the whole book. Yet many—nay, I had almost said *all*—*hope* to be saved. How is this almost flat contradiction to be reconciled ? Is it possible to devise any other way of reconciling it, than by supposing that many will be disappointed in their expectations ? that many will say, “ Lord, Lord,” and will not enter into the kingdom of heaven ? that many will hope to be saved ; will go out, like the foolish virgins, to meet the Bridegroom ; and will find, when it is too late, that they have no oil in their lamps, and that the door is shut ?—The task is ungrateful ; and our intentions are liable to misconstruction ; nevertheless, true charity requires us to speak plainly. A faithful minister of the Gospel must not content himself with mere general assertions. He must not content himself with saying many will be found at last to have deceived themselves : he must shew

men what sort of characters are in habits of deceiving themselves. He must not only warn them of self-deception in general, but arrange the self-deceivers in their respective ranks : he must mark well the distinctions, and endeavour to awaken their consciences.

In addressing a very respectable congregation, there is no necessity for me to suppose that any gross and audacious unbelievers are present ; or any who openly profane or ridicule the word of God : neither any who live in the open and habitual transgressions of the laws of their country, though they may have escaped their censure and animadversion ;—though, it is true, that even of these *adepts* in wickedness many will venture to express a hope that they shall be saved ; “ if indeed,” they may add, “ there be a future state of rewards and punishments ; if indeed the doctrines of the resurrection of the dead, and the eternal separation of the just from the unjust, be not old wives’ fables.” The condition of such men is awful and affecting beyond description, and charity requires that their case should be considered, and the friendly alarm sounded from time to time, together with solemn rebuke and salutary instruction ; but at present

I turn to much more numerous, I will not say more pitiable, classes of self-deceived, nominal professors of Christianity.

1. I would address that multitude of the inhabitants of a Christian country, whether they belong to the Establishment or to Dissenting congregations, who, if we except the observance of some outward forms and ceremonies, display nothing of the power of the Gospel in their whole conduct. They were baptized; and go to places of worship sometimes; but they seldom suffer the Sabbath-day to interfere with or interrupt their convivial meetings. They may or may not have taken the sacrament; perhaps it was necessary to do so, to qualify themselves for some civil office. Loose in their morals, luxurious and sensual in their indulgences, they are marked with the Christian name, but would disgrace a company of the more sober, industrious, and better sort of Heathens, Yet these “hope to be saved.” They never mention the name of Christ, or pray seriously for mercy, till alarmed by the near prospect of death and hell; and then, if their companions fail to divert their apprehensions, and cheer their drooping spirits, they will frequently in a fright have

recourse to some clergyman, and take the holy sacrament as a passport for eternity. It is not easy to gain a fair hearing with these men in their health and prosperity; otherwise *their* hopes of being saved might often be converted into fears and anxieties. But their resource consists in flying from thought, and silencing the voice of conscience by a round of pernicious amusements or criminal indulgences.

2. A second class of those who *hope to be saved*, consists of useful and industrious citizens, whose religion lies almost entirely in attention to their daily business or profession. Honesty and fair dealing in their intercourse with their fellow-creatures is the anchor of their hope. If they speak of Christ as their Saviour, it is from a general respect they have for their Bibles, entirely the result of education, and not of any internal conviction of sin, or need of a Saviour, which they experience in themselves. These not only hope to be saved, but take it amiss to be treated as lost, undone, miserable sinners. If *they* may not hope to be saved, what is to become of a large portion of mankind, who are inferior to them in diligence, fidelity, sobriety, prudence, honour, and

humanity? In fact, they not only hope to be saved, but, when compared with others, they think they have grounds for expecting much reward and approbation.

3. Now, if to all these excellent and undeniably useful moral qualities we add a strict regard to the external form and ceremonies of religion, such a description will comprehend a third class of Christians, who not only barely hope that they shall be saved, but who have great confidence in the safety of their condition. They comply with all the forms of religion, and they abound in virtuous actions: what defect can there be in such characters as these? here, if any where, they think, is rational ground to expect the approbation of God.

4. Even the *mere* formalists in religion, who are destitute of all useful and virtuous exertion, form a fourth class, of an Antinomian stamp; who, notwithstanding their want of fruit, nevertheless (like the rest) hope to be saved, on account of their religious *belief*, and perhaps their *zeal* for articles of faith, and their decorous respect for all the external ceremonies of religion.

Here I would pause for a moment, to reflect, what

immense multitudes, among the inhabitants of a country professing Christianity, would be comprehended in the four classes now briefly mentioned, could they be collected together, and separated from the general mass of their countrymen ! And all these, at least *hope to be saved*. The first class—viz. the profane and immoral—have been baptized, and are on a Gospel foundation ; and therefore hope for salvation. Much more the second, who are honest, useful, and industrious citizens. And still abundantly more the third class, because they unite a form of godly faith or belief with their moral practice. And, lastly, the pharisaical or antinomian formalists also have great hopes of salvation, simply because they are very orthodox in belief,—though they resemble painted sepulchres in their internal impurities. They all hope to be saved.—Pursue your reflections fairly ; and let us suppose their hopes to be realized ; and you must confess that then the Scriptures could not be true : these four classes can never be included under the description of the few who enter in at the strait gate. This contradiction, therefore, would be a great difficulty. Then reverse the position ; and suppose these same

classes disappointed at the last day ; and here, though we have an awful, a tremendous issue of things, yet I see no difficulty or contradiction between the fact and the Scripture representation. These numerous classes are disappointed ; the remainder of mankind cannot be very great ; and the Scriptures affirm that, in fact, few enter in at the strait gate. These things, therefore, agree. Weigh this argumentation nicely ; watch the inference as closely as you please : you may be disturbed by so affecting a conclusion, but you can discover no fallacy in the premises.

Blind and miserable men ! ye can reason justly, and with sufficient acuteness, on all temporal subjects, where either private or public interest are concerned ; but the eternal interests of the soul belong to a science in which ye have made no progress : ye know not even the rudiments of it : the Bible contains those rudiments, but ye either neglect that antiquated book, or ye are wise beyond the written word. Each of the four classes of the self-deceived, and each individual belonging to those classes, hopes for salvation ; and is misled by resting on the same erroneous principle,—that he has, in fact, something good in him ; something

of his own, which, in the great day of account, will be a sort of atonement, or balance, or a species of set-off, against all sins, defects, and imperfections. Observe the way in which men deceive themselves. Even the gross sensualist, or dishonest dealer, of the first class, who has ruined his health and his fortune, disgraced his friends and relations, debauched the innocent and helpless, and defrauded his companion and his neighbour, professes to have a friendly and good heart. He has been rash and imprudent, but his faults don't amount to vices; he was really humane all the time, and always ready to relieve the distressed; and, on the whole, he has been the worst enemy to himself: he would pay every tittle of his debts if it were in his power; and even though the laws of his country pronounce the prison or the gibbet to be his due, he can yet answer for the goodness of his heart to that Being who knows all secret thoughts. And, unless this profligate should fortunately happen to be better informed by a wise and honest clergyman, who may attend such culprits in their last mournful scenes, he can plunge into eternity with a good hope that a being like himself, who has been "unlucky rather than

wicked," will at last meet with mercy and forgiveness.

Thus the pharisaical principle of trusting to something good in ourselves (be it more or less) and making that something the foundation of our hopes of salvation, destroys its thousands and its tens of thousands. For hard indeed, my brethren, must that man's case be, who can find no virtuous actions which he himself can review with complacency and peace of conscience. Blind as fallen creatures are described in Holy Writ to be, believe me we have yet microscopic eyes in discovering numerous virtues and excellencies in our own peculiar cases : and these will always be abundantly sufficient to support a claim, or at least a flattering hope, of salvation. Even the pharisaical orthodox believer, who produces no Christian fruit *whatever*, looks upon his faith as the meritorious ground of his hope : this is the good thing to which *he* trusts, on which *he* relies for salvation. This man will talk of justification by faith alone, and how impossible it is to be justified by works ; but then he has imbibed erroneous notions in all respects of the true doctrine. In one word, he does not

(like the sound believer) apprehend Christ by faith, and trust to the *merits* of the Saviour alone for salvation; but, imagining that he himself has a right faith, *his belief* becomes his merit: he relies on that merit, and, though destitute of good works, he is nevertheless resting on a foundation of works for eternal salvation. His faith is a work of his own; his faith is meritorious: and thus, for his own merits or works he also *hopes to be saved*.

All these, my Christian brethren, make no scruple, always in common conversation, frequently in serious moments, and not unfrequently in their last moments, to express a hope of being saved at last. I own it becomes us to hope so too; but we must not shut our eyes to evidence, to scriptural declarations, and to rational probability: moreover, ministers are bound to warn the wicked of their way; and the more narrow the road is that leads to life, to point it out with the more precision and clearness. Indeed, the description of a real Christian, who treads daily this narrow road, should be the constant theme of our ministry; for this description, after all, is the best confutation of the false principles of all those, whatever class they belong to, who are hoping to

be saved without any just scriptural warrant. A brief description of the true Christian character will therefore now very properly conclude this discourse ; and it is my earnest prayer to Almighty God, that the comparison of the two systems (for in fact all the erroneous systems are but one) may awaken the consciences of us all, and excite a salutary spirit of self-examination.

My first observation (and it is a very important one) is, that ye should ever keep in mind that there is no virtue, no praise, no excellence, belonging to any one of the four classes described this morning, or to any other classes that can be imagined, which does not also belong to the true Christian. With the pharisee, he perfectly agrees in orthodoxy of sentiment ; and, moreover, whatever the pharisee teaches, sitting, as it were, in Moses's seat, the true Christian puts in practice : whereas the pharisee is apt to say, and do not. —The Christian has a lively faith and hope of a blessed resurrection. If in this life only he had to hope in Christ, he would be of all men the most miserable. But then, he cannot, after having pronounced an orthodox creed with his lips, join with any of the classes just described in following

the pleasures and vanities, or in being enslaved to the honours and profits, of this sinful world. “ Having food and raiment, he is therewith content.” Here he has no continuing city, but is seeking one to come. He assents to the speculative truths admitted by all the four classes—viz. that there shall be a resurrection of the just and unjust ; that the soul does not die with the body, but is carried either by angels into Abraham’s bosom, or hurried by evil spirits into a place of torment ;—but mark well the difference between him and those classes of men who hope to be saved on such bad grounds : Believing as he does, he refers all his concerns to a future life, this life being too short and shadowy to deserve his affections : and further, knowing his sinful nature, and total alienation from the life of God, and how he is sold carnally under sin ; knowing also how he is by numberless transgressions exposed to the condemning sentence of the holy Law of God, and, for any thing he could do, incurably so exposed ; he is ever inexpressibly thankful to his Saviour Jesus Christ, in whom whosoever believeth shall not die eternally. Still further, he has a sure hope of a blessed resurrection, because

Jesus has overcome death, removed the curse, justified him from sin, and opened to him the kingdom of heaven. Here on earth, therefore, his life is in Jesus, by faith : not he, but Christ lives in him. Communion with the Son of God is his chief joy and refreshment in this vale of tears ; and it is the business of his life to please and serve his Redeemer : and this he knows he cannot do, except he walk as He walked, and shew forth his Saviour's holy dispositions, his humble and lowly mind, his kind and charitable temper, his patience and long-suffering ; and he is fitted for all this, by being made, through the Spirit, *one* with his Heavenly Master. The Spirit of Jesus makes him a new creature ; and hence he is as totally distinct, in spirit and principle, from the very best of the four classes above described, as from the worst. He cannot, I have observed, profess a creed of orthodoxy, like them, and then plunge into the company, the diversions, the amusements and assemblies of worldly men, much less into their excesses of riot and sensuality, as if he did not believe what he uttered with his lips. His hope of being saved is well founded indeed, and approaches towards

assurance always in proportion to the spirituality of his Christian walk: it is when he relaxes in duty—when he loses communion with his Saviour, ceases to pray in private as well as public, gives way to the customs and fashions, the pomps and vanities, of the world—it is then that he has reason to fear lest, after all, he should become a cast-away.

Listen to this concise and simple description, ye who, while ye certainly belong to some of the four classes above described, still hope to be saved, and think there is no danger, nor any thing unchristian, in being conformed to this world. Alas ! Does not St. Paul say expressly, “ Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind ? ”

Brethren, there is a promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church of God ; and accordingly, in the very worst of times, there always have been a people of God ; there always have been living members of Christ's body, whose faith was lively, whose hope was patient and joyful, and who were travelling to the heavenly kingdom. These in their lives shewed forth the honour of God, and with them was the way of

peace, liberty, wisdom, and happiness. There have also always been classes of men who profess the same, or a part of the same truths, not without some feeling of conscience, but in whom the love of the world prevails : they will condemn open unbelievers, but their own unholy lives prove them to be dead in sins. Who ever heard of any one person of these classes of men being persecuted, or even slightly spoken of, on account of his religion ? And therefore, if these are the true church, who can point out the period when the church was reduced to a few, or was in danger of being extinct, and when peculiar and immediate Divine support seemed absolutely necessary for its existence ?

To conclude.—I beseech you, my beloved brethren, not to suffer these exhortations to be delivered from the pulpit in vain. Let no man satisfy his conscience with the trite salvo that religion may be carried too far ; that Christ's flock is not so very little a flock ; that the world is not so very bad as is pretended ; and that relaxations, pleasures, and amusements, are in themselves always rational ; that they prevent gloom, and melancholy, and enthusiasm. Oh, suffer not such

loose and general talk as this to stifle your convictions, and rob you of the precious prize of an eternal inheritance ! I know very well, that for a time ye cannot treat these scriptural views of religion with levity and censure : I defy any man living, to retreat into his closet, and laugh at the discourse of this morning, as overstated, as irrational, or enthusiastic. Read your Bibles, pray in private, ye that have doubts about the truth ; and beg of God to dispel them, to enlighten your understanding, and lead you into all truth, wherever you are to find it. And further : endeavour to be religious on the week-days as well as on the Sundays. But do not either read or pray formally, and merely for the sake of so spending so much time ; but rather aim at profit ; and see whether, even in a very short time, ye will not become better judges of religion than as yet you ever have been in your lives : in one word, see whether you have or have not any good ground for hoping to be saved. Again I say, Confer much with your own hearts in private, and with God in secret, and ye will not fail to succeed—succeed as surely as the OPPOSITE CONDUCT will also be effectual in dissipating presently every salutary impression

which may at this moment have been made on your minds. What I call the opposite mode, I scarcely need hint at : already I hear the profane whisper to you thus : “ Avoid privacy, as the very nursery of enthusiasm and melancholy ; seek pleasant, lively, and various company day after day ; frequent convivial, entertaining meetings, continually : and if all will not do to silence conscience, read some profane, light, witty, ingenious compositions, which ridicule enthusiasm and an over-religious spirit ; and select friends and acquaintance from persons of the same stamp with the authors of such writings.” These, I must acknowledge, are among the likeliest ways to preserve a relish for dissipation and worldly vanities even to grey hairs.

But, O beloved fellow-creatures ! if ye could enter into my real feelings during these moments of admonition, not one of you would think I went a single syllable too far : every one would rather feel grateful for this honest advice and exhortation. Nay ; ye would instantly examine your grounds of hope of being saved ; and ye would diligently compare the motives of your own conduct with the scriptural account of real Christians—and, indeed,

there is no other way of forming a right judgment in this great concern. Moreover, on trial ye would find that the true Christian does every thing with a view to the salvation of the soul: not so worldly persons. Ye hope to be saved; but is it as true that ye have acted with a view to your eternal salvation, as it certainly is true that ye have done many things to increase your fortune, gain the esteem of men, or settle your families in respectable situations? It is not that these things are wrong—for they are not only right, they are even indispensable duties—but then they are secondary objects; the salvation of the soul through union with the Redeemer, is the Christian's primary object, and the prize of his high calling in Christ Jesus.

I know very well, that numbers of any large congregation, after they have listened to representations of this sort, would gladly entertain a hope that preachers are mistaken in their doctrines. So thought the Rich Man a little time before he died and lift up his eyes in hell and saw Lazarus afar off in Abraham's bosom: so also thought his five brethren, whom he in vain longed and begged to revisit and inform of his place of torment. Ye

say sometimes, "What must become of us if these doctrines are true?" and yet there is no point on which the Scriptures are more explicit. Brethren, the mischief is, that the things of time and sense beguile us in spite of our better reason: we think lightly of sin, and create a god according to our own fancy, who will never be harsh, or take vengeance. At the sacrament, we say "the burden of our sins is intolerable;" yet we scarce feel their pressure. Only once cease to trifle concerning these things, be once in earnest, once treat the things of religion as realities and as near your hearts, and ye will soon become new creatures in Christ Jesus: old things will be done away; all things will become new: ye will have done with *hoping* to be saved where there are no grounds of hope: ye will bless the day in which ye began to turn to God through Christ with your whole heart; and ye will "walk before him, without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of your life."

But remember, that this turning of the heart to God, this great and fundamental change of the disposition, is as little in your own power to effect at any moment you may fancy, as it is for the Ethiopian to change his skin or the leopard his spot. Those

who have both evil natures and evil habits to conquer, cannot so easily learn to do good. Yet the most complete inability is no excuse for standing still : only seek God in his appointed way—that is, by prayer and meditation on the written word—and there is a promise of infallible success. Great mistakes are frequently made here : men set about a reformation in their own strength. Even mole-hills are beyond their powers, and they vainly attempt to remove mountains. “ Come unto *me*,” says our Lord, “ ye that are weary, and I will give you rest.” Go, then, for help where it is to be had “ without money and without price,” and where no faithful supplicant ever received a denial. This, my friends, is a piece of *information* of the utmost importance, yet very much slighted by beginners in the religious life, who rarely suppose it possible that they can fail for want of knowledge. They are apt to think they *know* quite enough, though they will allow they may be somewhat deficient in the practice of what they know. Brethren, ye must not so learn Christ : the Christian character requires not only zeal, but knowledge ; not only heat, but light ; not only affections, but understanding. Blessed be God !

his Holy Spirit is ever ready to supply all our defects, for the merits of his dear Son; through whom, by *faith in His mediation*, we may obtain all the purchased blessings of the new covenant.

I say, it is by faith in the mediation of Christ that all the blessings of the new covenant are to be obtained: and the expression leads me, therefore, to introduce a few words on the nature of true faith—on the nature of that Christian grace to which there is ascribed so peculiar and so powerful an efficacy. No doubt it is the pride and pharisaism of the human heart which causes so much opposition to the doctrine of justification by faith alone: men are not satisfied to be saved by mere mercy, exclusive of their own works: but it is, in my opinion, the very simplicity of the doctrine which has given rise to some degree of puzzle in this matter among religious men. For example, some well-disposed Christians, perceiving so many, if not all, the Christian graces, ascribed in Scripture to the operation of faith, have concluded faith to be a term standing for the aggregate, as it were, of all Christian principles put together. Now such an interpretation of Scripture is, I think, not only quite unnecessary, but in itself

far-fetched, and absolutely destructive of all precision of language. The right distinction is this : faith *implies* a great deal in the believer which is not faith itself; or, in other words, faith is connected, in the true believer, with many other Christian graces; not one of which, however, is faith itself, or any part of faith. Thus, no man can be a believer without being humbled under a deep conviction of sin and a sense of the desert of God's wrath; but yet this humility is neither faith, nor has it the peculiar nature of faith. Again: no man can be a believer who has not the love of God and man shed abroad in his heart; yet this most distinguishing characteristic of the most eminent Christians is a very different thing from the justifying faith of the Gospel. And so in many other instances. In one word, faith is the dependence of the heart on the Lord Jesus Christ for every spiritual gift of the covenant, according to the gracious promises of the Gospel: or, to change the terms, it is that act of the mind by which the humbled soul, conscious of demerit, feeling sin as a burden, and eager to serve God in newness of life, listens to the Gospel calls of reconciliation and obeys them,

and hereby acquires peace of conscience in this world, and an expectation of a glorious inheritance in the next.

This act of the mind, called faith, is itself a holy act, and is infallibly connected with every thing holy that can be imagined. But, then, the converse is not true: not every thing that is holy, is called faith in Scripture; and, in my judgment, to speak in such a way, however well meant, in many instances has a bad practical tendency; creating much confusion, error, and distraction in the minds of the beginners of a religious life, and very much hurting their growth and progress in the Christian course. This faith, wherever it is sound and lively, establishes a close connection between the Saviour Christ and the believing soul; and never fails to produce holy fruit in this world, and the salvation of the soul in eternity.—Further: a true Christian faith, though often charged with enthusiasm by those who neither know its nature nor its value, is in itself the most rational thing in the world. There is nothing in which, during any part of a man's whole life, he knows more perfectly what he is about, than when, in true penitence of soul, and in

utter despair of saving himself (by any powers of his own) from the Divine sentence of condemnation, he casts himself on the Saviour Jesus Christ, in the firm persuasion that he shall thereby have access to God, and receive remission of sins, together with peace of conscience and strength to walk before God in holiness and righteousness all his days. A believer of this stamp knows well what he is about, because he never relies on any fanciful impressions on his imagination, but on the written Word of God, which cannot deceive. The man feels his wants ; he sees the vanity of all attempts at salvation by his own works ; he applies for the true Remedy, and obtains it ; thanks God for his unspeakable Gift ; and adorns his profession with Christian fruit.

Such is the nature and the triumph of Christian faith. Delay not one day longer to make your choice, between the love of God and his Christ, and the love of the world. “ If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” And remember, likewise, that if ye once begin the religious course, ye must persevere in it to the end. And though we are not to be saved by our works, yet religion is, nevertheless, *a work*,

an undertaking of great magnitude. It is, moreover, a work which must be done, or the soul will not be saved : or, in other words, it is in vain to seek salvation, or to hope for salvation, in the way of indolence, negligence, or inactivity.

Ye have often both said and thought that *ye hoped to be saved*. It is the earnest desire of my heart, it is the object of my labour, that ye should have good grounds for this hope. But, mark me ! worse grounds no man can have, than to hope he shall be saved on account of the merits or value of his very best works : nothing can be devised more opposite to, more destructive of, the Christian covenant. Yet, nevertheless, it has pleased God (I repeat it) that in the way of that covenant, salvation should be not only a work or a business of great care and labour, but also a constant business : labour and care ye must never relax. Ye must take up your cross daily, and follow your Master : ye must surmount many obstacles : ye must overcome many temptations. It is a very great undertaking. Ye must allow yourselves in no one sin : ye must break off from them all. And lastly, as I have just observed, ye must finish this work : ye must

persevere to the ends of your lives : all your time, all your faculties, must be devoted to this work.

But then, my beloved brethren, remember my conclusion ; At last, in the Great Day, your faith, which has supported you in persecutions and temptations and death, will secure you an eternal inheritance, and a *crown of glory which fadeth not away*.

SERMON XI.

GENESIS v. 24.

*And Enoch walked with God, and he was not :
for God took him.*

THE history of Enoch is very short, but it is extremely important. I shall, first, collect the little which the Scripture speaks of him in different places ; and illustrate as I can his character, with a view to enable us to form a just idea of what is meant by *walking with God*. And this will, secondly, afford us obvious matter of exhortation and address, both to sinners, whether careless or more decent ; and also to holy men, and to all who desire to fear God, and to walk with him as Enoch did.

The very singular manner in which Enoch is taken notice of, in the catalogue of the old Patriarchs before the Flood, points out to us a

suspicion that the times he lived in were very wicked and corrupt. However excellent a thing it be to *walk with God*, it is no more than what *all men in all ages* ought to do. We are led, then, to suspect that the generality of persons in his time walked *not* with God, but after the course of this world, “the prince of the power of the air;” not the Spirit of God, but “the spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience.” In truth, the fall of man was presently followed by the most dismal effects. Witness the account given of the blood of righteous Abel; and of the earth being filled with violence; and of all flesh being corrupted in their ways upon the earth. Moreover, the Lord was induced to sweep away the whole generation of mankind, except eight persons, by a flood. But, before things proceeded to this extremity, it pleased God, by an act of singular and distinguished favour towards righteous Enoch, to shew to mankind that there is a God that judgeth the earth; that there is another life, in which his faithful servants shall enjoy their God for ever; and that the present life is too poor and low a scene for immortal spirits to set their affections upon. No doubt, as wickedness increased,

the sense of the distinction between good and evil was very much lost among men ; and there wanted not, even *then*, licentious and arrogant spirits, who would reason wickedly against God, and plead for the unrestrained indulgence of men's lusts, and represent God's future punishments of them as not real at all, or, if real, unjust and cruel. From the analogy of things, one should conclude that it was so then, as it is now, even if there was no positive evidence that this was the case (which we shall presently see we have) in Enoch's time. It was, therefore, a merciful and *instructive* providence to take Enoch out of the world, and to translate him to a scene of rest and felicity :—not only merciful to him, but to the world at large ; for what a proof did it give to men that God approves the just man's ways ! For it is not to be supposed but that the circumstances of Enoch's translation, whatever they were, were such as to give *full evidence* that the fact was real ; as was the case of Elijah's translation to heaven long after—which event also took place at a period of much wickedness and contempt of God, and at a time when the idol Baal was set up against the living God. And, indeed,

miracles in Scripture are never wasted. They are not done in a corner: they are evidenced in a fully satisfactory manner to the world;—for they are the voice of God; they bear witness for him; and are sermons addressed to the senses and to the passions of wicked, unreasonable men, who would be glad to believe, that God forsakes the earth, and leaves every thing to what is called *nature, or chance.*

Enoch lived sixty-five years before the birth of his son Methuselah. Whether his pious course commenced before the birth of Methuselah does not appear. However, after the birth of Methuselah he walked with God three hundred years, and had several sons and daughters. Three hundred and sixty-five years was the whole of his existence on earth; and, according to the length of men's lives at that time, he might be called a young person. But he lived long enough to shame an evil world by the light of his piety. While others walked after the sight of their eyes, and according to the imaginations of their hearts, he lived by faith in God. He saw the invisible God with the eyes of his understanding, and walked with him as a friend. He maintained a

connection with him in all he did : his whole course of life was directed to please Him : he received the Law from his mouth, and it was dearer to him than any thing besides. No doubt he conversed with Him by prayer, praise, and meditation, and had a holy and reverent communion with him, such as it becomes obedient creatures to have with their Creator. The account is very short, but doubtless he was reconciled to him by faith in the promised Seed who was to bruise the serpent's head ; for Enoch had sin and guilt, as well as other men. He was saved by grace ; and he was conscious of a Divine principle of grace, which gave him this happy turn of mind, and drew his affections up to God. Were it not for God's revealed promise of grace in Christ, he could have had no comfortable affiance in God from the light of nature, for that teaches no sinner how to obtain reconciliation with God : Revelation alone can do this for any man : and " how can two walk together, except they be agreed ? " I may justly apply this sentence of one of the lesser Prophets to the case before us. Enoch was reconciled with God, and therefore walked with him as a friend. Pleasant and precious privilege !

Oh! what so delightful as to call God *Father*, to enjoy his favour, and peace of conscience; to be indulged with the tokens of his presence, and the manifestations of his Divine perfections! To such a man, duty is a delight, the will of God is freedom, and holiness is the health of the soul; and such a man, even while on earth, has more to do with heaven than with earth, in the affections of his soul.

One may learn much of true godliness from Scripture phrases. There are other modes of expression, which worldly persons use, to denote a good man (fashionable modes in our days), which have little or nothing to do with Almighty God. Men would gladly make out a *virtue* that will save them, and which shall be quite unconnected with spiritual communion with God; and this is a dangerous evil indeed! But let us look at, and consider diligently, this very ancient phrase, "*walking with God.*"; You see at once, that whatever virtue men pretend to, without the love of God, and reverential awe and communion with him, let it look ever so specious, can be no virtue in his sight. But, if a man walk with God, he brings God into full, direct view in

all his affairs: a religious principle is the very foundation of all his goodness. Let us ever remember this, and it will help us to examine the pretensions of men to virtue, when we come to apply the instruction to be drawn from the case of Enoch.

And now, after this man had “walked with God” three hundred years, he was no more found on earth; for God had removed him to himself by a happy miraculous translation. And in the Eleventh of Hebrews we are told, that “by faith he was translated, that he should not see death; and was not found, because God took him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” But how did he please him? It is added, “without faith it is impossible to please him:” “for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” He had a lively, influential persuasion that there is a God that judgeth the earth; that he is to be found by them that seek him, as their portion and happiness; and this we know cannot be done except in substance on real Christian principles. Guilt cannot be taken out of the conscience but by faith

in God's promises of the Redeemer ; nor can the heart of such a creature as man be renewed and made holy, but by a principle of grace from above.

Such, then, was Enoch's case. And doubtless a man of this sort could not behold with indifference the wickedness of mankind. He must be grieved at men's folly and iniquity ; and charity itself must move him to rebuke sin, and labour to instil into men something of the same regard for God which influences himself. And such a spirit will always be misrepresented by a censorious world, because it provokes and thwarts them : hence such a person will be disliked by them : and yet he must give his testimony for God, though he be therefore represented as melancholy, bigotted, fanatical, or uncharitable. Moreover, God gave to this holy man a public prophetical character, to rebuke a sinful world. We have a very small specimen of his prophecy in St. Jude's Epistle. It is there said, that " Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all ; and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their

hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Thus we see it was the fact even in Enoch's time, that ungodly men had much to say against God's righteous ways ; and how much more learned have many men grown in it in our times ! But how very early, you see, it was foretold, that the judgment of God at the last day will be an awful judgment ! One may tremble to think what will then become of men who have lived ungodly by word and deed. At that day they shall be convicted and put to open shame : and such men little think how they will then be confounded, and feel themselves guilty as well as miserable and hopeless for ever.

This man, who "walked with God," thus lived in the contemplation of that judgment, and thus he warned mankind. It is now almost twenty years since, in this pulpit, I endeavoured to draw the attention of the congregation to the concise history with which God has favoured his church respecting this same holy antediluvian character, Enoch : and as I am not without good reason for believing that the observations which I then made were attended in some degree with God's blessing, I venture to hope, that, in bringing forward again the case of

this very extraordinary person, I may be found discharging my duty to this audience for their spiritual advantage. May it be your prayer and mine, that the contemplation of such a character as Enoch, whom Almighty God took to himself into heaven, before the ordinary course of nature had removed him from the evil world which vexed his righteous soul, may lead us all to serious consideration on the holiness of God, and the provocation which he suffers from wickedness; and may excite in our minds a fervent spirit of prayer for the grace of God, that we may become watchful against temptation, and not suffer ourselves to be swallowed up by the sad contagion so prevalent among the fallen descendants of Adam.

If the consideration of good Enoch's case proved beneficial some years ago, it may prove beneficial again. Examples, exhortations, and instructions, will ever be needful. I thank God, the preaching of the Gospel is not in vain: the promise is, that it shall be powerful and efficacious in the pulling down of the strong-holds of vice of every kind, and, indeed, of every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God: and He is faithful who has made the promise. It is always, how-

ever, the business of a wise and serious instructor to watch what may not improperly be called *the signs* of the times—that is, the peculiar circumstances in which religion is placed at any particular moment—and he is to adapt his instructions with these things in view. The substance of religion, the great points in religion, will ever be the same; but the times may call for a somewhat different administration of the same medicine.

We have seen what it is to walk with God; we have seen the happy end of this in Enoch; and we have seen the testimony which such men give for God against sin in the world. The contemplation of a saint of such extreme antiquity, is in itself pleasing and agreeable. It shews that God has ever had a church in the world; and as the light serves, among its other uses, to discover and point out what is dark, I would conclude with a brief exhortation to men of different characters.

Now, of those who walk *not* with God, there have ever been *two classes*. The first shew themselves plainly: They are open enemies of God. They think this is a harsh and uncharitable way of treating them; but I never can allow a man who is living in open rebellion against his Maker,

and following the devices of his own heart with greediness, to be a proper judge how he ought to be treated by one who is charitably disposed to do good (were it in his power) to that man's soul. He is prejudiced by the love of sin. Let him be left to himself, and he will always judge very tenderly of his own case. *Wrong*, to be sure, he will own, *very wrong* at times, he has been, in giving way to *drunkenness, lasciviousness, gaming, and sabbath-breaking*; but then he meant no great harm: his *heart* is very good, and honest, and sincere: his nature is frail, but he really has a good principle in him, though he be indiscreet at times; and he intends one day to amend. Now, there is not a profane scorner of all religion, there is not a licentious debauchee, or drunkard, or gamester among us, but is apt to talk at this rate, and persuade himself that his sins are not very provoking to God; that there is nothing but what he can easily make amends for to God by a few prayers, a little alms-giving, and the like; and that he shall find mercy at last: and, amidst a life of total forgetfulness of God, and of all religious duties, he is yet so *honest, so generous, so charitable*, and of *so good a heart*, that he entertains

no fears. This is the usual cant of these men. One might wonder where this good heart is to be found, that sends forth such evil fruits! A strange sort of a good and sound tree is that which is always bringing forth corrupt fruit! A strange sort of a *sweet* fountain is that which is always sending forth *bitter* waters! Need I remark, that such vicious characters are quite out of the way of all true repentance, while they continue to look at their vices as petty imprudencies, and think their hearts in the main right and good before God?

To walk with God, as Enoch did, is the duty of every reasonable creature—and, in truth, what can be so reasonable, so pleasant, and so altogether excellent? Nay, I might add, that guilty creatures like men, being, through Jesus the Mediator, allowed thus to walk with God, as a forgiving reconciled Father, is in some respects more delightful than if no breach had ever been made: for surely humility and gratitude are most truly Christian sensations, and the exercise of them will, I doubt not, form one of the most precious entertainments of heaven and immortality.

There is a second class, of more decent sinners, whom it is still harder to convince of their danger. They are self-righteous : they are, in a degree, in the condition of St. Paul before his conversion. They perform some duties, both religious and moral, but without any love to God in their hearts ; and they trust in the poor filthy rags of their own performances for acceptance with God, instead of the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. In general, a boasted species of humanity is their idol. A life void of faith in the promises, void of the spirit of prayer, and humility, and love of God, and heavenly-mindedness, is with them to be atoned for by acts of humanity. Because they pity the poor and the distressed—or rather often pretend to pity them—this, it seems, must make amends for all breaches of God's commandments, as well as all defects of obedience. Often, however, there is a great deal of hypocrisy in this matter, and a great deal of vain boasting and ostentation ; a great deal of talking about charity, and generosity, and sensibility ; where but too plainly men shew themselves devoid of the very things they boast of ; and remain, notwithstanding, hard-hearted, and mean, and selfish.

But, I ought not to dismiss this subject, without subjoining a short address to those who (there is good reason to believe) are really, like good Enoch, “walking with God” in the midst of a perverse and corrupt generation.

That these are not very numerous, I am warranted in supposing from almost every page of Scripture, which never mentions more than two classes of persons; namely, those who *serve* or *walk with* God, and those who *serve themselves*, the *world*, and its *ways*. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, was evidently a distinguished character, separated from the rest of mankind. Then, there were but eight persons of the old world who were saved from that flood which swept away all the ungodly at one stroke. Afterwards the Gentile world were immersed in the most disgraceful idolatry; and though the Jews had the benefit of a Divine Revelation confirmed to them by a series of the most astonishing miracles, and though they had the daily example of several holy prophets and judges and princes for their imitation, yet are they pronounced in Scripture to have been a wicked and stiff-necked people. Lastly, under the Gospel dispensation, Christ’s flock is con-

stantly described as a “little flock,” a “peculiar people,” the “few” who strive to enter in at the strait gate. Therefore, though the conclusion is awful and lamentable beyond conception, it is nevertheless inevitable, that we cannot be “walking with God,” if we belong to the great multitude or bulk of mankind; we cannot be Christ’s flock, if we belong to a very numerous flock. There is, in Scripture, a great deal said respecting the *world*, the *love* of the world, and the *ways* of the world; and I know not what these expressions can mean, if by the world we are not to understand the mass of mankind—the multitude—that unhappy, thoughtless crowd of men and women who cover the “broad way that leadeth to destruction.”

Were I disposed to speak smooth things to your ears, I might tell you all this was an unfair and uncandid construction of a few strong expressions in Holy Writ; that God was not so hard a task-master; that the whole world almost, would never be assigned to eternal ruin by a merciful God; that the frailties and infirmities of men would meet with great allowances in the Day of Judgment; and that these heavy threatenings and warnings were thrown out merely to make

men a little more cautious and watchful. Particularly, I might add, that in a Christian country things were very much altered since the appearance of Christ in the world: men were now baptized, and belonged to the church, and took the sacrament, and gave frequent alms, and were in general good-natured and useful to one another;—That, undoubtedly, there were *some* grievous offenders in every country; and that it might be necessary in the next world to inflict exemplary punishment on these, if they did not repent: but that no man would be punished severely, much less with everlasting torments, because his passions, in some instances, had proved too powerful for his reason; because he had been weighed down with infirmities, or surrounded with temptations; or, lastly, because he was rather of a thoughtless and giddy turn of mind, fond of cheerful and convivial meetings, and not much addicted to prayer or religious meditation.

Oh! my brethren, I feel assured that I might deliver these very unchristian sentiments from most pulpits, couched in plausible language of this sort, so as to ensure not only a patient hearing, but even much applause for my candour and

moderation, and rational interpretation of the Scriptures. In this case, the many would go away pleased and comforted, or lulled asleep in their unchristian notions and practices; and the few, whom I am supposed to be addressing as persons who are *walking with God*, would be surprised, disappointed, and grieved;—in short, a man of Enoch's class and habits might well say, with the Psalmist, “ Verily, then, have I cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence: Verily, the preacher has *reversed* what I had understood to be the Scripture account of walking with God: Verily, he tells us, the servants of God are in crowds travelling on the broad way to heaven, and entering in at the wide gate; while only a few, very few, incorrigible offenders are thinly scattered on the narrow road and passing through the strait gate to destruction.”

Still, beloved brethren, provided I could but conscientiously say that the Scriptures were on my side in prophesying smooth things, I might say, with St. Paul, that “ it was a very small thing with me that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: He that judgeth me is the Lord.” And it ought indeed to be esteemed by me a

small thing, whether the many or the few approved of my interpretation of Sacred Writ.

But, brethren, *the night is far spent, the day is at hand*; and the consideration of that tremendous Day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be brought into judgment, ought to fill all our minds with the most awful apprehensions. I dare not, therefore, dissemble. No less than an eternity of happiness or misery is at stake in regard to every human being that hears me. And, among the several scriptural marks of distinction, this is *one*,—*To walk with God*. And as certainly as Almighty God took Enoch because he walked with him, so will He, at the resurrection of the dead, take those to himself who during their life-time walk with him here. Therefore, the single question is, Can you honestly *affirm*, can you with any degree of well-founded confidence *think*, that you are actually walking with God in the ordinary course of your lives? Examine yourselves closely on this head; for I am supposing you to have some sort of pretensions, and (at the least in a certain degree) to be imitators of the holy character of Enoch. Beware, then, of trifling: Beware of leaving the matter short: Work out your salvation with fear

and trembling: Make your calling and election sure; for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do. He is faithful, and his part he will most assuredly perform.

You who really walk with God, are not only a happy and a cheerful people, but the only people who can be happy and cheerful on rational grounds. The happiness and cheerfulness of the rest of mankind can be supported *only* by suppressing all serious thoughts of the next world, and turning a deaf ear to the admonitions of conscience: whereas you, if you walk closely with God, have real pleasure in self-examination, and in practical inquiries how to improve, and, in one word, how to abound in every good work.

“ Enoch walked with God.” — To *walk* with God, evidently implies a *steady course* of practical religious action. Walking with God does not consist in an occasional prayer, offered up when fortune frowns or health totters; but in a rational submission to the Divine will, and in a firm dependence on the Divine protection. It consists in self-denial, and the mortification of our stubborn, depraved wills, and in patient waiting for a crown of glory in the world to come.

Observe distinctly, that though religious men are few, yet it is not their paucity that makes them religious. Walking with God by no means forbids the multitude, or excludes them from so walking themselves. Enoch was a holy man, not *because* he stood almost alone amidst a wicked and untoward generation; but he *therefore* stood alone *because* he was a holy man, and because the rest of mankind were sunk in iniquity. In other words, singularity will never make any man religious; but, in a wicked world like this, a man must be singular in some respects, or he cannot be religious. Fear not, however, little flock, for though ye cannot walk with God without being singular, “it is nevertheless your Heavenly Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Your title to heaven is founded on the merits of Christ: your evidence that your title is good in your own particular case, is, *not* that ye are *few*, but that ye actually walk with God; *not* that ye are *singular*, but that ye are *faithful*, and that ye resist the temptations of the devil, the world, and the flesh.

Others *boast* of their being rational: men that walk with God *are* rational, both in their belief

and their practice. I maintain that those who walk with God closely, have the advantage over the rest of mankind in all respects, even in this world. How can it be otherwise? Let us but briefly examine one single day—and all days are the same to the man whose heart is fixed on serving his Maker.

His eyes open in the morning with God in his thoughts: his heart is thankful, for mercies received: he prays for strength from his Saviour, that he may ever persevere in his ways. He reads a portion of his Bible, and studies its meaning. The Scripture is his constant guide. He depends on Jesus as his Redeemer: he looks up to God with humility, yet with confidence: and he abounds in acts of charity to all mankind. To his family he exhibits an example of piety and devotion towards God; of industry and faithfulness to all mankind; of kindness and benevolence to all his immediate dependents. Life is short; but this man is so temperate in his refreshments, and abstemious in his indulgences, that he is rarely pressed for time: he has abundance of time to be a good citizen, to be a useful head of a family, and, lastly, for all the purposes of secret commu-

nion with God. It is, indeed, in this last-mentioned business—viz. secret communion with God—and in preserving a taste, a relish for spiritual things, and in restraining depraved tempers and bad passions, that he is most eminently distinguished from irreligious and worldly men. These are, generally, either industrious through ambition or avarice, or indolent through a love of pleasure and sensuality. I have no wish to disgrace them further, by a comparison of their daily practice with those characters who walk with God. It is more to my purpose to exhort all those who have any pretensions or any desires to imitate good Enoch, to be more and more watchful and diligent and circumspect in all their conduct, that they may set brighter examples, and silence gainsayers.

St. Jude says that Enoch complained of the hard speeches which ungodly men spake against him: take, therefore, especial care to give no unnecessary occasion for similar hard speeches on your account. Leave the execution of judgment to Almighty God, whilst ye are contented with rebuking sin of every kind by your better example. Do ye *pray in secret* for the very per-

sons who *misconstrue* your motives and despitefully use you ; “ and your Heavenly Father will reward you openly.” When reviled, never imitate the ungodly, by reviling again : when injuriously scoffed at, and represented as fanatics or enthusiasts, always let your answer consist in a sober, modest, decent, and wise conduct. *Never* use hard speeches. Even when often treated as hypocrites, rebuke the slanderous insinuations, not by sharp answers, *not indeed by words* of any kind, so much as by positive *acts* of kindness and charity, and standing foremost, in all matters of acknowledged utility, with your advice, your labour, your money. Ever remember, that Christ died for those who at present judge of you so unkindly ; and that He prayed for his persecutors, saying, “ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do !”

Most assuredly, whoever at this day are enemies of Christ’s religion, know not what they do : therefore, never exasperate them, under the pretence of giving them religious advice, by rude or affronting speeches, or by pert introductions of scriptural passages at improper times, or, lastly, by discovering a consciousness of your superiority in

Biblical knowledge ;—and these observations particularly apply to younger students. These things, brethren, do no good ; they rather feed the pride of our own corrupt nature, and they certainly place us at a greater and more unfriendly distance from those whose immortal souls we should wish to profit.

I say then, again, in conclusion, Let no man, who conscientiously hopes that he is walking with God, either vex or exasperate *unnecessarily* evil men of the world, with whom he cannot but have to do on many occasions. Let this be ever remembered as the great distinction,—*never to do so UNNECESSARILY*. There are times enow when you *cannot* avoid displeasing them ; there are times enow when you *must* come out from among them ; or, if you do you remain with them, you *must* rebuke their vices, their indecorums, their levities, their intemperance ; when you must thwart their corrupt inclinations, must damp their diversions, and refuse to join in their unchristian amusements.

The great hold which you have on such persons, is by applying with much plainness to their consciences, and with much brotherly love to their

affections. On all proper occasions, therefore, make close appeals to their consciences ; and never cease to discover by your conduct, your unfeigned regard for their immortal interests. Men may think me mistaken, men may dislike the advice I give; but they cannot, it is impossible they should, be unkindly affected towards me, so long as they are fully persuaded that what I say is most cordially intended to promote their eternal welfare.

Oh, beloved brethren, “the time is short !” “the axe is laying to the root !” years roll away apace, almost unobserved ! Death makes his constant ravages among us, and puts an end to this state of probation. We never part for a few months, but, when we meet again, we have to deplore the loss of several who were lately among us, but are now in eternity. Why will not every individual who hears me, listen to a single additional word of good advice ? Why will ye not begin self-examination afresh ? Why will ye not open your eyes, and judge for yourselves, whether a most pure and disinterested regard for the salvation of your souls is not the real, the only motive, that can be supposed to dictate these exhortations ? Why will ye not studiously examine the Scriptures for your-

selves, and see that these things are so? I do not hesitate to say, that a steady and persevering use of your rational faculties in reading the Bible, with earnest prayer to God that he may enlighten your understandings, together with an avoiding of all sinful practices, will most assuredly be productive of the most blessed effects on your lives, on your comforts in this world, and your prospects in the next. Only try : only be truly in earnest, and ye will not be disappointed : on the contrary, ye will be astonished at yourselves ; ye will thank God that ye were placed in the hearing of these exhortations ; ye will improve in spiritual knowledge, and spiritual, Christian practice ; ye will die happy ; and will only wish you had sooner turned to God and heavenly things, and sooner left the unsatisfactory pursuits of an evil world. Far be it from me to say presumptuously that there will not still be left plenty of faults for your observance ; but, still, there will be a great change in your dispositions, a great improvement in your tempers : and this will be two-fold.—

First. Ye will see that the love of the world, and of the world's ways, are entirely inconsistent with the ways of God and of his Christ. More-

over, the sacred Scriptures, through the divine assistance of the Spirit of God, will instruct you in the art of discerning spirits—that is, of judging discreetly concerning the real state and condition of persons who make pretensions to the profession of religion. No doubt your chief concern will be that ye yourselves may grow in grace and the knowledge of God; but, still, ye will find it of great advantage to your own improvement, to perceive yourselves enabled to distinguish clearly the tares from the wheat with much greater probability: for in some instances there may be a very fair outside—great decorum, and great regularity of conduct, much worldly prudence, and even much humanity, mildness, and liberality—yet not one particle of the real love to God and his Christ, not one particle of true Christian humility and of self-abasement. Pride of heart, ambition, worldly-mindedness, and Pharisaism, demonstrate the rottenness of all pretenders of this sort. On the other hand, where the natural temper is *unamiable*, and perhaps irritable, or disposed to lowness of spirits and melancholy, or perhaps to sloth and indolence—and, I may add, frequently to covetousness—there may yet be much

of the grace of God even in such an unpromising soil as this.

Now let no man misapprehend my meaning. I say, there may be these things in the *natural temper*; and therefore the grace of God will have, most undoubtedly, a great deal to do, a great change to effect: for God forbid that I should say these unfavourable symptoms are still to continue in their growing and flourishing state! That would indeed be a proof of the absence of the graces of the Spirit, and not of their presence. But this I say: the truly spiritual man may have hard fighting with his old corrupt nature, and may even gain the victory, so that sin shall not have dominion over him; and yet he may have, while he continues in the flesh, many failings; and, from his corrupt nature, he may experience many struggles, enough to humble him, enough to keep him on the watch, and make him very diligent in his applications to the Throne of Mercy for help in time of need.

Secondly. This improvement in the knowledge of the Christian life will, of necessity, produce the improvement in Christian temper and affection

to which I alluded. And this consists in a truly charitable way of estimating characters ;—that is, ye will not only know how to discern the true Christian better wherever ye can perceive him, but ye will be better disposed “ to hope all things, to believe all things, to endure all things :” ye will learn to place the stress on essentials both in doctrine and practice. It is far from true that the genuine followers of Christ Jesus differ materially in any one of the essential doctrines : in outward forms and ceremonies they may differ, and so in many other lesser matters ; but in the general principles of redemption by the blood of Christ, of regeneration of our corrupt nature and sanctification by the blessed Spirit of God, they have agreed in all ages since the first promulgation of the Gospel.

These, brethren, are the grand practical points to which you must for ever look : they are the marks by which you are to steer your course through a perverse generation : they are the only principles by which you may hope, like good Enoch, to walk with God. They are the principles which will prove your comfort here, and

your support under all trials : and in the blessed mansions of immortality you must on the same principles throw down your crowns, and sing the song of the penitent sanctified sinner, “ Thou hast redeemed us by thy blood ! ”

SERMON XII.

1 TIM. i. 5.

Now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.

THESE words denote the subject recommended by the Apostle Paul to Timothy's attention as a Christian minister. They express the ideas which he wishes him to impress on his own heart, and also to inculcate on the people who were under his charge; at the same time lamenting that others, by neglecting these things, had run into various speculations of no utility to the church of God, and had turned aside unto vain jangling. At least, then, the Holy Spirit of God bears us witness, through the pen of St. Paul, that the subject before us is no vain jangling, no idle question, but is the very life and soul of the

Gospel itself. It ought, therefore, to be your prayer and mine, that God would be pleased to point it out to us in its real power and its beauty ; and that he would graciously direct our endeavours in the consideration of it, so that it may afford us salutary and substantial evangelical edification.

“ The end of the commandment,” he says, “ is charity,” or love—for this same Apostle in his First Epistle to the Corinthians chap. xiii. has explained at length, and in the most beautiful manner, how this great Christian grace of *charity* is ever to be distinguished from mere liberality. The man who is possessed of true charity, *must* be a liberal man ; liberality is a necessary ingredient in the charitable man’s composition : but the contrary is not true ; and St. Paul, who well knew to what pernicious mistakes we are prone, guards us most particularly against such a conclusion, by informing us that a man may give all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burnt, and yet be devoid of charity.

When, therefore, it is said that the end of the commandment is charity, we must distinctly remember not to deceive ourselves, by substituting, in the place of that comprehensive Christian grace

called charity, either a little, or even a great deal, of that mere humanity, or ordinary benevolence, which shews itself in freely bestowing our goods upon the poor. This is a very dangerous mistake, and a mistake likely to be made in the age in which we live, which, to speak in general, is no doubt an age of humanity.

That true Christian charity, which in my text is pronounced to be “the end of the commandment,” comprehends the love of God and of our neighbour;—meaning by our neighbour (as we are taught to explain the term by our blessed Lord himself) all such of our fellow-creatures as we happen to have intercourse with, according to the sphere of action in which we are called to move in this present world.

But, needs it to be mentioned, that in this account the love of God must stand foremost? for “God himself is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and He in him.” That which all the revealed religion of Jesus aims at, is to teach us to love God and one another. The man who possesses true love, is fit for heaven and its happiness. Indeed, true happiness consists in love. Try, in the utmost extent of your imagination, whether you can conceive happiness

to consist in any thing else but love to God and man. And then only, when this heavenly gift and grace is attained in perfection, will the soul be completely happy, and need no more but the continuance of this for its enjoyment to all eternity.

A very little observation and careful reflection on the state of mankind, will convince us that naturally we do not possess this inestimable blessing of love. Alas! the love of God implies the exercise of a temper in no respect habitual to man. Rather we are averse to God. We are described by St. Paul as “at enmity” with God; as having our “hearts alienated from God.” When he calls on us, when he invites us to turn again unto him, we are apt to hide ourselves from him: we imitate our first father, who hid himself among the trees of the garden from the presence of God.

Never, therefore, let any one of us flatter himself that he possesses that which he does not possess; for I am bound to inform you that this is dangerous ground to tread. Because, if you persist in maintaining that the love of God is naturally in you, and that you have always loved God all your lives, the Gospel of Christ will not suit your case: according to your own account, you possess

already what the Gospel professes to bring to you. The end of the Gospel commandment is this very thing,—the love of God as its primary, and the love of our neighbour as its secondary, object. The whole apparatus of Gospel contrivance is intended to produce in the heart of fallen man this charity, which is here called “the end of the commandment.” Naturally we are supposed to be without the charity here spoken of: the Gospel finds us in this condition—to use the words of the Homily, “without one spark of love to God in our hearts;”—and it is in conversion to Christianity, that is, in receiving Jesus Christ in all his blessed offices, through repentance and faith, that this grand Christian grace is to be attained.

The Gospel of Christ is the only medicine for our nature; but in the right application of it we have both much to learn and much to unlearn. The erroneous notion of our having some power to help ourselves, and do a considerable part towards regaining the lost favour of God and meriting his future rewards, is a notion so rivetted in our minds, that nothing but the powerful and efficacious grace of God can loosen and remove it. It is true, that our natural consciences are not so entirely

darkened and marred by the Fall but that we do retain some ideas of good and evil ; we naturally approve the good, and disapprove the evil ; but, instead of making a good use of this remaining light, this fragment of knowledge, we are very apt to mistake it for an inclination of our wills to what is good : we forget that it is one thing to approve in the judgment and understanding, another to be disposed in the will to comply with what we know to be right. The very complaint which St. Paul makes against the heathen world, is, that, while their consciences informed them in many things of their duty, they nevertheless gave themselves up to all manner of iniquity with greediness.

This notion of the power of natural conscience carries some persons a very great length indeed. “ Conscience,” say some, “ tells us what is right : then what need of a revelation ? ” Others, who go only about half this length, are apt to look on Revelation as a thing not to be entirely rejected, but as a sort of help : “ Revelation makes up deficiencies, gives light on very dark points, and proposes encouragements, together with examples of eminent virtue.” Now all this is perfectly

contrary to the Gospel. The Gospel does not take up such a scheme as this and finish it, but erases it from its very foundation. It does not, I say, allow it to be a right plan as far as it goes, and only to stand in need of improvement and completion : it pronounces it radically wrong : not only its superstructure, but its basis, and every part of its edification, is essentially different in principle from the Gospel.—Whoever, therefore, supposes that he has *by nature* this charity in his heart, has this dangerous error to unlearn : and he is most seriously to be admonished, that if ever he means to do any service to his immortal soul, if he would ever learn the Gospel to good purpose, he must begin his religion with this persuasion, that naturally he certainly is without that love of God which we are now considering. And, surely, to make out this satisfactorily a very little experience and insight into a man's own disposition is sufficient. For example : If it be natural for us to love God, whence comes that dislike for prayer which we all shew from our infancy ? Do men dislike to converse and hold communion with those they love ? Again : Is not sin of every kind provoking to Almighty God ; and does it

not daily call forth his wrath and vengeance?—A thousand proofs may readily be brought to teach us that naturally we have not in us the love of God.

And in regard to the second branch of love—viz. that of our neighbour—can any man, who sees and laments the selfishness which prevails among mankind, both in public and private life, believe that men have naturally any sincere love for their neighbours, much less that they love him as they do themselves? No doubt there are certain instincts of compassion to the distressed, and also the affection of parents to their offspring, which produce many kind effects on human society, and very much stop the general current of misery which otherwise would overflow the nations; but these things are far from being the effects of a true, genuine love to our neighbour, and, in truth, are rather the marks of a compassionate and over-ruling God, who, in his constitution of frail and depraved mortals, has interwoven some steady principles of action, which operate with a benign influence on the affairs of men independently of true religion and virtue.

Never forget, then, that the intent of the Chris-

tian religion is to teach us effectually the love of God and of our neighbour, of which we are naturally void ; and in this way to bring us to heaven and happiness. Let me entreat you to bear steadily in mind this “end” of the Gospel : and the Apostle will instruct you, in the words of my text, in the proper means which lead to this end. Certainly they are not such means as any *man* would have invented. In fact, you must not look for them from any investigations of your own, or of others, and call that hearkening to reason. If the New Testament be indeed of God, and contain a display of Divine truth calculated to lead men to the true love of God and of their neighbour ; and if we suppose man, as the Scripture always supposes him to be, in a “fallen state by nature,” and void of this love ; then it is the most rational thing in the world to hearken to the Bible as to the voice of God, and, moreover, to do so, by laying aside all prejudice to what is there revealed.

After such statements and representations as these, one would think that self-interest itself would induce us to look with care and eagerness into the Scriptures, there to learn the way of attaining the enjoyment of God in love. This, when

attained, will prove our everlasting happiness ; and the beginning of it must be laid in the soul here, if we would enjoy the fulness of it hereafter. Let no man therefore say, “ There are other things which call for our attention first—and we will afterwards listen to your advice.” That *afterwards* may never come ; but the night may *soon come* when no man can work. If you feel one tittle of inclination to enter on this subject, for your eternal profit, lose no time ; break through all obstructions ; attend to the one thing needful : suffer not yourselves to become the derision of Satan, whose malevolent object is to ruin the souls of sinful men by preventing their repentance and turning again to the God in whose image they were created.

The text which I have placed at the head of this discourse, expresses in the clearest manner the Gospel way by which this great event is to be brought about—viz. the event of turning to God with our whole heart ; of recovering again the Divine Image, lost by the Fall ; and obtaining charity, that is, this very love of God and our neighbour of which I have been speaking.

You observe, that the text specifies three things as the means of attaining this most desirable end,

called the “end of the commandment”—viz. a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned.—By “the commandment,” we are here to understand the Gospel commandment; the Gospel dispensation; the Gospel way of acquiring this blessed end, called charity. And the word “end,” is peculiarly emphatical in this passage. In one sense, the end of all Gospel instruction, the object of all Gospel efficacy, may properly be called the production and attainment of every one and all the Christian graces, the edification and perfection of the whole man in Christ Jesus; but in the passage before us there is observed an instructive *order*, a peculiar precision in the *arrangement and connection* of its several parts. Faith is the leading idea in this arrangement: it is the first and the fundamental link in the chain. The Gospel, throughout every part of it, teaches us that without faith there is nothing to be done. When this faith is “unfeigned”—in other words, when it is genuine—it leads the soul to rely on the Saviour for every blessing that the heart of man can conceive, and, what is far more to the purpose, for every blessing which the Scriptures promise to the believer. This faith implies, and supposes, a conviction of a man’s

lost state by nature; a sense of the guilt of sin, and of its ruinous consequences, with a deep contrition on account of it; and an earnest desire to turn to God in newness of life. Along with these things there must be an insight into the holy character of God, with grief on account of our want of love to so holy a Being, and also on account of what is ever sure to accompany this defect, a want of love to our neighbour.

Here, then, is the place for a close examination of ourselves. Do our hearts subscribe *without murmuring* to the just sentence that condemns us? Or do we think that God would be an unfair, unequitable Judge, were he to leave us to perish in our sins? Do we imagine, that, though imperfect creatures, and falling short of fulfilling the law of God in every point, there has yet been sufficient good in our past lives to appease the Divine wrath and displeasure, and pave the way for mercy and forgiveness on account of all the blameable, and all the imperfect or the less meritorious parts of our conduct? Then, with such views as these cherished in the mind, I say, The Gospel will not suit your case: you are not in a state of preparation for the reception of Christ.

It is not a partial, a divided work, which our Redeemer is to perform. As long as you harbour such thoughts, you don't comprehend his true character; you neither give him his glory, nor are aware of your own wretched and helpless condition. The suitable advice in these cases is, "Search the Scriptures;" search your own hearts; watch the emotions of conscience, till you are brought to that humble sobriety of thought which becomes poor sinners. While a man rests in any degree on his own merits for acceptance with God, it is of little consequence whether he be a pagan idolater, or a proud, ignorant pharisee; both go about to establish their own righteousness, neither submit to the righteousness of God, and I know not which of the two are *more* distant from the kingdom of God.

Some there are, who seem thoroughly convinced of their lost state by nature, and of the necessity of applying to Jesus for a full and free salvation, and yet are so diffident and slow to believe and close in with the precious offers of the Gospel, that they spend their days in a state of much fear and bondage, and discomfort *at least*, if not of absolute mourning and dejection. Sincere persons

of this class are to be encouraged with warm and affectionate addresses, and to be assured that Christ stands at the door and knocks, and is ready to receive them. I bid them seriously consider, for whom it was that Christ died. Let not, therefore, such persons dishonour their Saviour any longer, as though he was not ready and willing to receive them: let them remember, that if the truly penitent and contrite may not take strong consolation from the promises of the Gospel, none can be allowed to do so: and if it could be conceived possible that such characters would be rejected by Christ, all the purposes and ends of his incarnation, his ignominious life, and his sufferings and death, would be defeated.

Here I must venture to intimate to timid characters of this class, whom I am supposing to be truly sincere and humbled in the main, that, notwithstanding the very favourable condition in which I am describing them to be, there is still a very specious way in which the artful tempter of mankind may assail them, and do them in the end very essential mischief, if they hold out imprudently and pertinaciously against the invitations of their Saviour. The tempter may suggest to their minds,

You are not yet penitent enough; there are several points in which you must materially amend your ways before you can expect to be cordially received by your Redeemer. He may tell them, You are too worldly-minded; too fond of money, or of pleasure, or of gratifying your passions: you are not yet qualified to be Christ's disciples. And thus Satan is transformed into an angel of light, and preaches strict morality. Now, if persons of tender consciences listen to such advice as this, they may for ever be kept at a distance from the Great Physician of souls. If humble minds, who have gained an insight into the purity of God's Law, and who truly lament their natural aversion to spiritual and heavenly things, are to be thus continually poring over their imperfections, and dreading lest the door of the Gospel should be shut against them, they will not only remain in the aforesaid wretched state of discomfort, but will be misled in the use of right means for deliverance: the covenant of grace will grow darker and more confused to their eyes; they will wander like lost sheep, and never feed in the pastures of the true Shepherd. In one word, a livelier faith, a more implicit confidence, a freer, a closer, and a

more frequent intercourse with Jesus by prayer and holy contemplation, is the thing particularly called for in this case.

From this account it appears, that the proud, self-sufficient pharisee, on the one hand, and the truly humbled penitent sinner, on the other, are the extremes, as it were, of the sort of characters which the Gospel has to treat ; and between these extremes all other descriptions of persons lie. The less they have of the pharisee, and the nearer to the penitent sinner, the better. The Gospel can do nothing for the complete pharisee. When the man is perfectly satisfied with himself, there can be in his heart no place whatever for the Gospel. But when a sense of unworthiness has humbled the soul—when the terrors of the Law have awakened its fears—when the beauty of the Divine holiness has wrought in it a reverential awe and esteem—and, lastly, when a sense of God's goodness in Christ has melted down all enmity and opposition, and won the heart to a love and approbation of the covenant of grace in Christ Jesus—then it is that the Gospel does wonders ; then it is, that, as the Psalmist says, “ the Law of God converts the soul,” and fills it with peace and joy in believing.

These considerations will shew you how *different characters*, of all descriptions, are to act for the attainment of this great end.

We have seen that pharisees have every thing yet to learn—the Redeemer does not suit their case. They need a new heart; and they will never take pains to obtain a new heart till they are convinced that the heart which they have is corrupt, defiled, and has no health in it. Those who *have* a conviction of this sort, are in a degree prepared for the reception of Christ Jesus on Gospel terms: but this their *preparation* is to be measured precisely by their sense of guilt, and their unfeigned contrition. In proportion as they lean to pharisaism, these will be weak and inefficient; and, as the invitation of Jesus is to the “weary and heavy laden” with guilt, it is impossible their faith should be strong.

Therefore, brethren, trifle no longer in this most serious of all concerns. Examine your own hearts: “search the Scriptures:” see what the holy Law requires; remember its threatenings and its thunders: fly, in faith and thanksgiving, to the true Refuge of sinners, “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

Suppose the last trumpet was actually sounding,

and the dead rising from their graves ; the Son of God appearing in the glory of his Father, and summoning us all to answer before his judgment-seat ! Our eternal state is about to be fixed ! Now, what mean you to plead before him ? Away with pharisaism ; it cannot stand its ground for one moment. But some may say, We have made the Judge an amends by a considerable quantity of good conduct, though we are not perfect. Oh ! reflect seriously, whether you don't think it safer, and better savouring of evangelical humility of soul, entirely to cast yourselves on grace and mercy ; confessing yourselves altogether undeserving, and begging your Judge not to enter into judgment with you, but to forgive you freely. The holy Psalmist has told you how he felt in this matter : “ Enter not,” says he, “ into judgment with thy servant, O Lord ; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.” — Brethren, I am persuaded that the least true reflection on what is glorious to God, what is safe to ourselves, and what becomes us as guilty creatures, will teach us to repose ourselves wholly on God's gift of eternal life by faith in Christ Jesus. And as we have the unerring word of God to assure us, that “ he

that hath the Son, hath life ; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life ;” can we doubt to pronounce those blessed, whom Christ at his coming shall find so trusting in him to carry them safe through death and judgment?——I beseech you, then, go along with me one step further. You will not deny that death and judgment may surprise us at any moment ; and, therefore, if it would be indeed a blessed thing to be able at the sound of the last trumpet to put our whole trust in the Son of God—by which means we should then possess the Son, and have life eternal—it surely must be a wise thing now to live under perpetual apprehensions of our nearness to those same awful scenes in which we are so deeply concerned, and which will shortly render necessary that “unfeigned faith” of which the Apostle speaks in my text. By so doing, this “faith unfeigned” would become a constant and an abiding principle within us : the love of the world would grow weaker : our thoughts of God and his judgment would be serious and enlarged ; and we could not rest contented with building on any other foundation than this, that *Christ Jesus freely bestows a blessed eternity on unworthy sinners who have*

fled to him weary and heavy laden, and conscious of there being no health in them.

In arranging the three ingredients of my text, which are mentioned as terminating in *charity* the “end of the commandment,” I have placed “faith unfeigned” the first, because it is the most active in practice, and also the most prominent in theory. In effect, the “good conscience” and the “pure heart” are rather to be considered as the consequences of faith, the grand spiritual instrument, than as original co-efficient and co-operating causes. Moreover, briefly, the good conscience, or the pure heart, do not give rise to unfeigned faith; but this faith is inevitably followed by a good conscience and a pure heart. We are exhorted in the 10th chap. of Hebrews, to “draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; having,” it is added, “our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.” Here it is very plain, that if the heart be sprinkled from an evil conscience, the conscience is made “good;” and it is equally plain that the conscience becomes good through the heart being “sprinkled” with the blood of Christ, and in no other way. Thus the several parts of Scripture hang well together in beautiful analogy

and connection. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus : they are at peace with God ; their minds are at ease as to the great, the immense concern of their eternal acceptance. St. Paul's account of this matter, in another place, is, that " we are accepted by faith into this grace wherein we stand."

The third ingredient of the text, out of which " charity, the end of the commandment," is to arise, is a " pure heart." And surely there can need little argument to convince you, that where there is faith unfeigned, with a good conscience, there must also be purity of heart. Always look to the Scriptures for your Gospel views. Hear St. Peter, in the council held at Jerusalem : " Purifying," says he, " their hearts by faith." Hear the author to the Hebrews : " The blood of Christ shall purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." Hear St. Paul : " Beholding the Lord's glory, we are changed into the same image." These, and such like, are the genuine effusions of the Christian's heart when under a sense of God's pardoning love, and a view of the Lamb of God taking away the sins the world. He asks, " what reward shall I give

unto the Lord for all his benefits?"—and here you have at once the true foundation of a holy, sanctified life. The language of our Church, in its Confession, is precisely the same: "Restore thou them that are penitent;" and the restored penitent prays that he "may hereafter lead a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of God."

To conclude. The great questions in religion must ever be, How shall fallen and corrupted man be so restored to a sound condition that his heart may willingly return to his Maker? How shall the love of God be rekindled in him, and his future obedience secured here on earth, that he may be fitted for a glorious and blessed inheritance in the world to come? Now, it has been the object of this discourse to answer these important questions. My text, which points to charity as the end of the commandment, contains the answer in brief: neither is there any other way in the counsels of God for effectually softening and changing the hard heart of man, or for illuminating his darkened understanding. All the plans and schemes, and all the multiplied lectures of the philosophers, failed in this grand point; they always ended, as they

are sure to do, either in despair or in a proud and ostentatious presumption. They cannot succeed, were it for no other reason but that they are not of God's devising for the recovery of his lost image, for communion with him, and the eternal enjoyment of him.

The mystery of godliness consists in the efficacy of the blood of Jesus by faith unfeigned, through the operation of his Holy Spirit. All the Apostles are of one mind in this matter. "He that hath this hope in him," says St. John, "purifieth himself, as he is pure." Here, you observe, is the "pure heart." Whereas men are naturally disposed to go the other way to work—viz. "I must first make myself pure, and then I may venture to make application to the Redeemer Jesus Christ."

Brethren, I must not dismiss this attentive congregation without impressing, as strongly as possible, the nature of that "faith unfeigned" which is the foundation of every Christian grace. It makes the conscience good, and at peace; it purifies the heart; it terminates in a sanctified habit of love and obedience. It must, therefore, be of the greatest importance that we do not mistake the true nature of that which is so operative, so salu-

tary in its effects, and upon which so much depends.

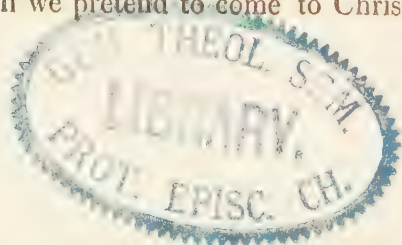
1. First, then, what it is not. It is not a mere assent to the history of the Gospel : it is not a mere belief in the truth of Revelation, of a future state, and a judgment to come. No man can say, “ I believe these things, and therefore I love God and man, which is the end of the commandment.” This is not sound reasoning : there is something further in this matter.

2. The humbled Christians argue thus : “ Guilt and condemnation stare us in the face : ‘ we err and stray like lost sheep, and there is no health in us.’ But, blessed be God ! we perceive his goodness in forgiving our sins, and receiving us to a covenant of grace. ‘ Christ hath loved us, and given himself for us.’ Hence we love him in return for so much goodness.”

This is the faith of the Gospel, this is coming to Christ for salvation ; and, as the third Homily speaks, “ is a sure trust and confidence in God’s merciful promises to be saved from everlasting damnation, whereof doth follow a loving heart to obey his commandments.” Brethren, let it be our fervent prayer that we hold fast unto the end

the profession of this holy faith. It is not a question of preference between several good plans of religion : there is no other plan for becoming a new creature, but this of faith unfeigned, out of a pure heart and good conscience ; no other, that will end in holiness, in eternal happiness. When men call it enthusiasm, I shew them it is the most rational thing in the world to believe God and trust in his promises : I refer them to the Scriptures ; I refer them to the Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies of our own Church. And when they tell me that it leads to sin, I range myself under the banners of St. Paul, who in like manner was told that he preached “ *sin*, that grace might abound :” I range myself under the worthies of the Reformation from Popery, and shew men, by a cloud of holy witnesses, that there is no other way of producing one particle of genuine Christian holiness, but that which is built on this faith unfeigned, which has been the subject of this morning’s discourse.

But remember, beloved brethren, that, after all, no great reliance is to be placed on mere words. It will be your business and mine to take care that, if we pretend to come to Christ, all our actions,



every part of our deportment and intercourse with the world, must be such as becometh the Gospel of Christ. *That* is the true way to convince gainsayers.

By the blessing of God upholding and protecting me, I trust to hold firm unto the end the profession of that faith which, out of a pure heart and a good conscience, terminates in “charity, the end of the commandment.” I would to God it was as clear that I might adorn my profession by good works, as I am fully satisfied that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and that the setting him forth as such is the only way to produce good works. Every new circumstance that happens in the history of religion strengthens the views which I have laid before you; and though I cannot but deeply lament that these views should be a stumbling-block to many, I am not on that account to cease my endeavours to undeceive them. There is, however, one admonition which it is always expedient to impress on the minds of such persons—namely, that it is not a matter of indifference whether they will hear or whether they will forbear: for, in regard to the issue, it is *their* concern, and *not mine*. I mention this, because

it is frequently intimated that these are matters of speculation only, and therefore in a great measure matters of indifference. Surely, brethren, this is a pernicious mistake. Oh, remember the Psalmist's advice, " Kiss the Son, lest he be angry !" Ye in fact reject Christ, if ye receive him not aright ; and no man can reject Christ with safety. It is *my* concern, undoubtedly, to state the truth ; and it is at my peril if I neglect to do so : but, as I have just observed, the issue of these things is the momentous and awful concern of others, and especially of those who so often hear the truth.

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